



HUMOR
IN
UNIFORM

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In war and peace, military life has its own rich stream of humor, as in the story of the Canadian Army private who was asked by a solemn board of officers what he aspired to be when peace returned. "All I want," he said, "is to be a returned soldier."

Here, gathered together in one booklet, are many of the anecdotes and stories this rich stream has provided for the pages of The Reader's Digest over a period of years. Whether or not you've ever known the sweet solicitude of a sergeant or been lost in the tangled thickets of military red-tape, we hope and feel you'll enjoy them.



An American officer and his wife stationed in Japan had a little Japanese maid, Kimi, who was devoted to their six-month-old son. Repeatedly when they returned home late at night they found Bobby sleeping with Kimi in her bed. Not wanting the baby to become spoiled, they told Kimi firmly that Bobby must stay in his crib.

On their return the next evening, the parents tiptoed into the baby's room. He was sound asleep in his crib — and so was Kimi.

—Mrs. V. A. Mason

When a cute little WAC sergeant decided she wanted to quit the army, our major sat himself down to have a serious talk with her. "Tell me, Sergeant," he began, "what advantage would you have in civilian life that you don't have in the service?"

Her answer ended the interview. "I could date officers," she replied.

—Jeanne E. McPhetron

Cartoons by Richard Zemnickis

An army friend tells me that servicemen, with characteristic shrewdness, have reduced the maze of army rules and regulations to three simple formulas: 1. If it moves, salute it. 2. If it doesn't move, pick it up. 3. If it's too big to pick up, paint it!

—George F. Willison

It was 3 a.m. and one of our largest transports was loading 10,000 soldiers. Snow was falling heavily and there was no singing or whistling in that crowd of heavily packed soldiers. Cold, scared, grimly silent, they were shuffling unhappily aboard when something happened which changed the whole atmosphere of that sailing. A redheaded Irish boy halfway up a gangplank turned, cupped his hand to his mouth and shouted: "Hey! Is this trip really necessary?"

—William L. Stidger

In a men's clothing store a young corporal, assisted by a pretty girl, selected a civilian suit and tried it on. The girl looked him over critically, then gave her verdict: "You're still cute."

The salesman, thinking he was about to sell a complete wardrobe, said, "I suppose you have your discharge and are getting ready to be a civilian again."

"Oh no," returned the corporal. "My girl just wanted to see how I looked in civilian clothes before she made up her mind about marrying me."

—Helen Via

A nurse in an overseas hospital fell in love with an officer patient, and they planned to wed the day he was released from the hospital. Not wishing to be married in her khaki uniform, she got permission to wear a wedding gown. After the ceremony the over-

whelmed groom announced to all: "Isn't she lovely? This is the first time I've ever seen her with a dress on!"

"Isn't he handsome?" the excited bride exclaimed, "It's the first time I've ever seen him when he wasn't in pajamas!"

—Will Oursler, quoted by Walter Winchell

A navy physician on a battleship received from his fiancée a snapshot taken on a beach and showing two couples smiling contentedly while his girl sat alone at one side, forlorn and lonely. The accompanying letter explained that this was how she was fretting away the time until he returned. At first the physician was delighted, displaying it proudly to several fellow officers. That night, however, after studying it a long time in silence, he turned to his roommate. "John," he said, "I wonder who took that picture?"

—Robert J. Doyle, war correspondent of the *Milwaukee Journal*

A sailor wrote a friendly letter to a girl back home. She answered in a more-than-friendly manner. When he reciprocated warmly, a succession of increasingly passionate love letters ensued, culminating with the girl penning a missive of such high temperature that she thought surely her Romeo would be unable to outdo it. INFLAMMABLE was even stamped in red ink on the envelope. A few weeks later she received an answer — an envelope containing mere ashes.

—George W. Crenshaw

Two London charwomen were discussing the inconveniences of the wartime blackout. "But it's a necessary evil," said the proverbial Mrs. Malaprop. "Else we're likely to be blasted into maternity."

"'Tis so," said her companion. "But the worst of it is, we'd never know who done it."

—Helen B. Baldwin

The personnel manager asked the youthful ex-lieutenant what business experience he had. "None," was the reply. "I just got out of college when the war started."

"Well, what kind of job do you think you could handle?"

"Oh," breezed the applicant, "something executive. A vice-presidency, for instance."

The partner looked thoughtful. "I guess that lets us out," he answered. "You see, we have 12 vice-presidents already."

The other waved a hand nonchalantly. "Oh, that's all right," he said. "I'm not superstitious."

—John Straley in *Investment Dealers' Digest*

An excited army recruit asked his company commander for an immediate furlough — his wife was going to have a baby. Permission was granted and, when the furlough papers were drawn up and the soldier was leaving, the officer asked casually when the baby was due. "About nine months after I get home, sir," replied the recruit.

—Lt. W. J. Furman

A soldier returned to camp exhausted after a week-end of Wine, Women, Women, Women and Song. On the bunk that held his recumbent form, his buddies hung a sign: "Temporarily Out of Ardor."

—Pte. James T. Shaw

Attu, the most western of the Aleutian Islands, is probably best remembered by those who served there because of its mud, its snow, its perpetual fog and its high winds. Heating our Quonset huts was complicated by the fact that the oil stoves were

continually being blown out by blasts of wind when the men forgot to close the doors.

The navy carpenters found a way to lick this problem and still observe military courtesy. On the door of their shop, in large block letters, was the sign:

SHUT THE DOOR, STUPID!

NOT YOU, SIR!

—Lt. Cmdr. R. G. Vliet

On my fourth jump as a paratroop trainee, a sudden gust of wind tossed me into an apple tree. I crashed through it and ingloriously landed on my rear. Divesting myself of my harness, I recovered my aplomb and swaggered into a nearby store. "I just came through your apple tree, Pop," I told the proprietor, "and lit on my rear without a scratch. I want a coke to celebrate."

The old gentleman looked me up and down. "Don't see what you got to celebrate, son," he said. "Been a whole family of baby robins flying out of that tree and ain't been a one lit on his bottom yet."

—David Paul George

In Korea one night, two soldiers were lying on their cots. One was gazing longingly at his collection of pin-up girls. After watching him for a while, the other said, "Try not to think of them as women, buddy, but as 92 percent water."

—Betty Unger

"You have never kissed so wonderfully before, Laura. Why is that — because we are in a blackout?"

"No. It's because my name is Vera."

—The Living Age

A newly arrived plebe at Annapolis unwittingly violated the tradition that Bancroft Hall should never admit a woman to its inner sanctum. He and his girl friend were undetected as they carried his equipment down a hallway and began stowing it in his room. But when he heard a military step approaching, it occurred to him that the presence of his pretty companion might not be regulation. Dumping out the contents of his duffel bag, he quickly threw it over her head and pushed her onto a bunk with orders to crawl into the bag as far as she could.

The midshipman stepped into the doorway just in time to detect the last wiggle of the duffel bag. He ordered that it be emptied, then directed the couple to the nearest exit with a harsh reminder that the incident would go down on the plebe's record.



It was a blue plebe who awaited his fate in the following weeks. But when he saw his first conduct report he gained new respect for the navy way. The one entry under misdemeanors: "Unauthorized gear in laundry bag."

—Richard P. Strader

Behind the flight operations desk, where pilots with furrowed brows struggle with triplicate and quadruplicate forms concerning weather, cargo, passengers and aircraft conditions, hangs this sign: "When the weight of the paper work is equal to the cargo capacity of your aircraft you are cleared for take-off."

—Bert Rockwood, Jr.

An Australian who spent a particularly rainy war-time winter in England was asked what he thought of the country. He looked out of the window at the barrage balloons tugging at their cables in the dripping sky, and replied, "Why don't they just cut the ropes on those things and let the place sink?"

—Edward Murrow over CBS

During the First World War, Marshal Foch's chauffeur, Pierre, was constantly besieged by his comrades with: "Pierre, when is the war going to end? You ought to know."

Pierre tried to satisfy them. "The moment I hear anything from the Marshal, I will tell you."

One day he came to them.

"The Marshal spoke today."

"He did? Well, what did he say?"

"He said: 'Pierre, what do you think? When is this war going to end?'"

—Lion Feuchtwanger, *The Devil in France* (Viking)

In March 1945, in Germany near the Rhine, our division had just taken a small town south of the Remagen bridgehead. A priest came out of his church and began talking with us. He pointed out that one of the twin steeples of his church was badly damaged. "And we had just completed the war repairs on the other steeple," he sighed.

"What damaged the first steeple?" I asked. "An air raid?"

"Oh, no," he replied, "It was artillery."

Since the Allied artillery had only that day moved up within range, I was puzzled and asked, "Whose artillery?"

"Napoleon's" he answered.

—Maj. Neils A. Parson

A recruiting poster showed three eager-looking sailors. The first was saying: "I want adventure"; the second: "I want security"; and the third: "I want education." Underneath, a fourth anonymous salt had scrawled in emphatic penciled letters: "I want out!"

—Glenn Longino

Ours was a medium field-artillery battalion that had been on MP duty in Korea before hostilities broke out. We were hurriedly training and girding ourselves for action, meanwhile requisitioning many items of equipment. But in spite of repeated requests, we did not receive essential radios and telephones. Finally our battalion commander, thoroughly annoyed, made out a requisition for 5000 blankets. The commanding general quickly had him on the carpet, demanding why on earth he had submitted a requisition for 5000 blankets.

"Sir," retorted our commander, "I've been requisitioning the radios and telephones that I need for weeks and I still don't have them. I thought if I got these blankets I could at least send smoke signals."

—Capt. Gunnar E. Andersson

As part of his combat training for Korea, a young air force captain was attending survival school. Asked by one of the instructors if he had ever had any experience in survival, he replied, "Oh, yes, sir. I was raised in a family with five sisters!"

—Donna Gusek

A young ensign was insistent that he must have leave. "My wife is expecting a baby," he told his commanding officer.

"Listen, young man," snapped the C.O., "remember

this — you are only necessary at the laying of the keel. For the launching you are entirely superfluous."

—Margaret Johnston

During our take-off on a training flight, as I was tightening a loose hydraulic connection, I suddenly saw that an engine was on fire. Wrench in hand, I turned, touched the pilot calmly on the shoulder with it and told him, "We're on fire."

He soon had us safely back on the ground, and a short time later I was modestly explaining my great presence of mind in a trying situation to an admiring audience. Just then two medics passed, carrying our pilot on a stretcher. Startled, I called, "What's the matter with him?"

"Broken shoulder," came the laconic answer.

—Les Black

In a Dutch garrison, the colonel finished his speech to the recently drafted recruits and asked if there were any questions. There was a murmur in the back of the room, and one voice was heard saying, "Bet you a guilder you don't dare." Then, amidst suppressed giggling, an embarrassed soldier came to attention and stuttered, "Sir, don't you think there are too many colonels in the army?"

There was a second of dead silence, and then the colonel replied, "There are indeed, soldier. What this army needs is one more brigadier general."

—Dirk M. Schroeder

The other day I asked a fellow airman, whose wife was expecting, just how soon the great day would be. "Don't know," he replied. "But if it ain't down soon, the doc'll have to bring it in on instruments."

—James T. Woodlee

A sergeant was going before a board for promotion. After numerous military questions, the chairman posed this mathematical query: "If you had \$34.61 in one pocket and \$15.73 in the other, what would you have?"

"Sir," the sergeant replied instantly, "I'd have someone else's pants on!"

He was promoted.

—Lloyd D. Larson

The navy captain I served as secretary loved wine, women and cocktail parties. It was a toss-up which he liked best. "I wish I had all the money I've spent on women in my life," he said one day.

"What would you do with it if you got it back?" I asked.

"Start spending it on women all over again," he replied.

—E. R. Keller

During a typhoid epidemic in Germany caused by polluted water, U. S. Army officials insisted that high standards of water purification be maintained. One order stated in full: "All ice cubes will be boiled before using."

—Capt. Willis E. Lorey

I had recently been discharged from the army when I met a buddy, still in uniform, who had served with me at the front. After a hearty exchange of greetings, I gestured toward the impressive row of ribbons on his chest. "What did your girl say about all your medals?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, "the first thing she said was 'Ouch!'"

—Joe Ryan



Guests in a Cairo hotel, hearing a scream in the corridor, discovered a damsel in negligee being pursued by a gentleman who was, to put it bluntly, nude. Later it developed that the impetuous Romeo was an English major who was promptly court-martialed. His lawyer won him an acquittal, however, by virtue of the following paragraph in the army manual: "It is not compulsory for an officer to wear a uniform at all times, as long as he is suitably garbed for the sport in which he is engaged."

—Mabel Dana Lyon, quoted by Bennett Cerf in *The Saturday Review of Literature*

"We would never do for infantrymen," commented J. B. Priestley, registering with other 47-year-olds for national service in wartime Britain, "but if you armor-plated some of us we might do as tanks."

—Bulletins from Britain

The aviation instructor had just delivered a lecture on the use of parachutes. "And if it doesn't open?" someone asked.

"If it doesn't open?" repeated the instructor. "Well . . . that, gentlemen, is known as jumping to a conclusion."

—Hugh E. Mullins

While I was an army nurse serving overseas in World War II, my mail sometimes went astray. One letter from home finally reached me in Australia after having been mis-sent to an isolated post in Alaska. On the envelope was the penciled notation: "Not Here —Dammit!!!"

—Margaret F. Olha

The drill sergeant was putting a squad of draftees through their first paces. Finally, exasperated at their uneven lines, he roared: "Whatsamatter! Don't you know how to line up? All fall out and look at the line you've made."

—Pathfinder

It happened during June 1944, when the press camp of General Patton's army was pinned down in a Normandy hayfield. Before dawn, I was awakened by the excited gabble of the patrol policing the camp. Their topic was a pungent, mysterious aroma which had flooded the area and which none of them could identify. Perhaps Hitler, maddened by reverses in the West, was starting a poison-gas attack? An alert was telephoned to an outfit trained for such emergencies.

As day broke there came the sound of an arriving vehicle. After a quick investigation, a new voice, disgusted and weary, snapped:

"So this is why we have to stumble out in the middle of the night, load a truck with gas masks, chemicals and impregnated garments — just because a dumb bunch of city wise guys don't recognize the smell of new-mown hay!"

—Richard L. Stokes

In a lecture to a group of Korean officers, Lieut. Gen. Bruce C. Clarke, at that time deputy commander of the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea, took two or three minutes to tell his favorite joke. His interpreter then quickly translated the joke, using only seven or eight words. Everyone immediately burst into hearty laughter.

After the lecture General Clarke asked the interpreter how he had been able to retell such a relatively long joke so quickly.

"Well, sir," the Korean interpreter replied, "I didn't think everyone would get the point, so I said, 'The General has just told a joke. Everyone will please laugh.'"

—Lt. R. H. Setleck

At one air force base the connecting hall of a large double-wing building has been converted to offices. Signs on the door of each wing leading to the hall read: "This is not — repeat not — a thoroughfare! Please use the doors at either end of the building for access to the other wing. This is an OFFICE! This is not a thoroughfare. When this door is opened, the resulting wind blows papers all over the desks and madness ensues! This is not a thoroughfare!! Please use the doors at the end of the hall. This is an office! Please!"

Below is written: "After disregarding these instructions, please shut the door."

—Major H. W. J. Hager

Following the loss of a leg in battle, I was a patient in hospital. Like the others, I dreaded the too obvious sympathy of strangers.

One day I was in my wheel chair at the foot of a ramp down which another amputee was coming on crutches. As he neared a door leading to the street, a woman entered, saw the soldier on crutches and exclaimed: "Oh, you poor boy, you've lost your leg!"

Whereupon the soldier looked down, then up, his eyes wide with surprise, and answered: "Why, I'll be doggoned if I haven't!"

I like to think the woman learned tact from this encounter. I know the rest of us were helped.

—Bruce S. Tait

In a small army-camp town, a soldier was having trouble cashing a check. The cashier was firm, but sympathetic: "You will have to have identification from some of your friends from the camp."

At this the soldier answered frantically, "But I don't have any friends in camp—I'm the bugler."

—Wayne Roe

Faced with the problem of what to give her fiancé for Christmas, a friend of mine decided on an identification bracelet. On the outside she had engraved his name, rank and serial number — Lt. Lawrence J. Bishop, 0-404-9017 — and on the inside — Cathryn Miller, 36-24-36.

—Kay Duplichan

The ocean was rough and visibility poor, and as our ship fell into the convoy column it bumped the stern of another vessel, but without doing any real damage. The weather grew even worse, and ships of the

convoy became scattered over a wide area. Finally we received a coded radio message telling us where to rejoin the convoy. We changed our course, and a few minutes later there was a terrific crash. We had rammed the same ship a second time. Frantic, our captain signaled, "CAN YOU STAY AFLOAT?"

"Yes," flashed the other skipper. "TRY AGAIN."

—J. A. Rademacher

A navy recruit lost his rifle on the firing range. When told that he'd have to pay for it, he protested: "Suppose I was driving a navy jeep and somebody stole it. Would I have to pay for that, too?" He was informed that he would have to pay for all government property he lost.

"Now," the recruit said, "I know why the captain always goes down with his ship."

—Julie Coxford

It was time for the annual physical exams, and I was waiting at the U. S. Naval Medical Center for the doctor. A young intern, who was arranging some instruments, struck up a conversation, asking me about my job, and how I liked Washington. I launched into a highly unflattering report on postwar Washington, its climate, housing and prices, and on the Navy Department and my duties there. He heard me out, then scribbled something on a paper.

A bit apprehensive, I asked, "Did I say something wrong?"

"Oh, no. You just passed the psychiatric part of the examination."

"But what if I'd said everything was just peachy, that I loved my job?"

"Then," he said, "I would have had to ask you a few more questions."

—Bruce McCandless

An officer in the Royal Navy being considered for promotion may submit a letter to the Admiralty concerning his fitness. Such a letter can invite attention to some talent previously unnoted in the official record, some past success previously unheralded, or attempt to cast a more favorable light on some aspect of his career that was not so successful. The tone of the letter is invariably formal, correct and solemn. So when the following letter reached the Admiralty not long ago, it created quite a stir:

"As Their Lordships are no doubt aware, there is always one name on every promotion list of whom everyone remarks, 'How on earth did he make it?' I wish Their Lordships to be assured that I shall not be the least bit discomfited if, upon publication of the next Commander list, I am that officer."

P. S. He made it.

—Athena P. Smith

At a banquet given at the officers' club of the Luftwaffe in Berlin in honor of Gen. Ernst Udet, a young corporal was selected to serve the beverages to the famous ace. At one point, as the corporal was refilling the general's glass with wine, he was suddenly distracted and poured some wine onto the general's very bald head. There was dead silence at the table, and the young airman froze at attention, the wine bottle in his trembling hand.



With a broad grin, Udet wiped his head with a napkin and turned round, saying, "Do you think, son, that treatment will help?"

—Wolf F. Wenck

My husband, a chief petty officer, was on the personal staff of Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, then U. S. Chief of Naval Operations. When our first baby was two weeks overdue, the Admiral told my husband, "I think your wife's waiting for orders." So the CNO sent me this memo:

From: Chief of Naval Operations

To: Mrs. Robert White

Subj: Delivery of Vital Cargo

1. Inasmuch as the vital cargo you are carrying is so important to YNC White, and since in his position undue nervous strain is to be avoided, you are directed to ensure delivery at the earliest practicable moment consistent with safety of carrier and cargo.

2. Should delivery be much longer delayed, it is recommended that mild sedatives be stocked for the use of Chief White, and that necessary data as to cause and demurrage rates be furnished him.

3. The navy takes pride in delivering the goods, and hopes that you will live up to this fine heritage!

The baby arrived two days later — a son, Robert Arleigh.

—Mrs. Robert White

The general conducting a staff meeting at his headquarters was trying his best to be tolerant of a brash young captain, bucking hard for promotion, who kept interjecting his own opinions and brushing off those of all the others present. After a tirade from the captain, the general said, "Young man, sometimes it pays to listen to other opinions even though they may differ from your own."

"But, sir," he replied unabashed, "I dare say that's not how you made general."

"No, it's not," said the general tartly. "But it's damn well how I made major!"

—Capt. William J. Buchanan

In 1950 our ship was sent to a shipyard for general overhaul and repairs. During our stay there we had "change of command" ceremonies. The crew assembled and the old skipper, after a lengthy speech, turned the command over to our new skipper and left the ship. The new captain looked the crew over and said, "Men, before anything more is said, I would like to clear up one thing. This isn't my ship — this isn't your ship — it's our ship!"

A voice from the crew muttered, "Good! Let's sell it!"

—Charles S. O'Connor

After the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942, German and Italian planes came over almost every evening, just after dark, and bombed Maison Blanche, the airport for Algiers. One evening they scored a direct hit on about 3000 gallons of 100-octane aviation gas.

Drums kept exploding and throwing their flaming contents in every direction. All of us ran onto the field and started pulling away the planes closest to the blaze. Suddenly we heard the unmistakable hum of a German plane coming our way. To avoid being machine-gunned in the light from the fire, we ran for the protecting darkness.

I was just behind two sprinting soldiers when one grabbed the other and pulled him to a halt. As I skidded to a stop behind them, I heard the one drawl, "Come on, let's walk. Ah'll be damned if Ah'm gonna die outta breath."

—Anthony B. Harris

Just before my brother-in-law's destroyer, the U. S. S. *Murphy*, left port the two men capable of operating her condensers, which turned salt water into fresh, were transferred to other ships. This posed a real problem. But after the destroyer was

under way, when the captain inquired anxiously about the condensers, the engineer told him, "They're operating nicely. I found a couple of boys who can run them very well. They come from the hills of Kentucky and they say these are the best stills they ever saw!"

—Elisha C. Durfee

I happened to be in the adjutant's office when a visiting general arrived to make an inspection. He soon discovered that the adjutant, a first lieutenant, didn't know too much about his job and office. "What were you before you became an officer?" the general asked.

The lieutenant replied, "I was a staff sergeant, sir."

"Well," said the general, "I can understand how you made first lieutenant, but I'll be darned if I know how you ever made staff sergeant!"

—Roy T. Simmons

A noncommissioned officer wrote this in an essay: "It is commonly supposed that the first duty of a good soldier is to die for his country. This is a mistake. The first duty of a soldier is to make his enemies die for theirs."

—David Goldberg in *Chicago Sun*

Users of the soft-drink machines at our air base are supposed to return empty bottles to the wooden cases stacked beside the machines. But the rule is more often broken than obeyed, and dire warnings posted on the machines have little effect. However, one ingenious sergeant now has the lowest missing-bottle record on the base. On his machine is posted this sign: "Test your intelligence. Place the round bottle in the square hole."

—Louis Trenner

During his "toughening-up" period in training, my son's friend Joe asked permission to phone his mother long distance. "What the blankety blank are you," the C.O. barked, "a sissy?"

"No, sir," he replied. "But my mom is."

—Mrs. Robert C. Neely

The main entertainment at a servicemen's dance I ran for the Red Cross was a ballroom dancing couple. They insisted on having non-skid wax sprinkled on the floor, and I searched all over town for it. When I finally located some, the supplier insisted on donating it.

After the dance, I dictated a thank-you note to him which my delightfully confused secretary transcribed as follows: "Please accept my thanks for letting us have the slip-proof WACs for our party. It was a pleasant and wholesome evening for the servicemen."

—R. E. MacIntyre

While under way on operations in the Far East, the Officer of the Deck of our submarine glanced up and noticed that the number one periscope was in a raised position. Hollering down the conning tower, he ordered: "Quartermaster, house the scope."

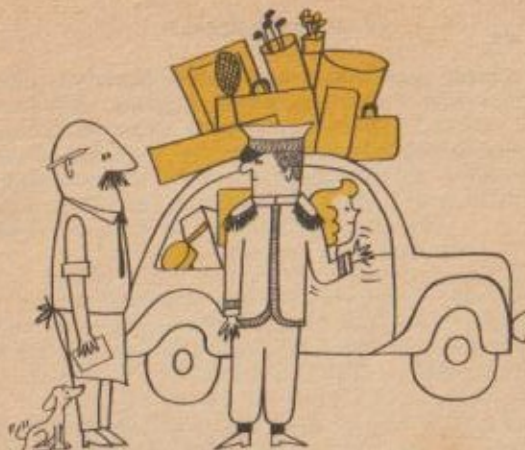
Up came the answer from a young third class quartermaster: "Just fine, sir."

—Gayrie G. Hall

The girl friend, worried a little by newspaper stories about soldier marriages "down under," demanded of her hero, "What have those Australian girls got that we haven't got?"

"Nothing," he wrote in reply. "But they've got it here."

—Eleanor Hope



When my husband tried to get a hotel room for us in the army town where he was stationed, he was turned down because he couldn't prove that we were married. Finally, in desperation, he brought the desk clerk out to the car. "Now look, buddy," he said. "Would any man in his right mind haul all that junk around if he wasn't married?"

We got the room.

—Martha S. Arterburn

Flying over northern Quebec in an RCAF Dakota, we hit a bad air pocket and took a spine-jolting drop. As I groped on the deck for my upper plate, I was amazed to see another airman, who had been napping, unsnap his safety belt, get up and head for the exit door. Sticking my chipped chompers back into my mouth, I grabbed the fellow by the shoulder and shouted that we were still thousands of feet in the air. As he resumed his seat he said sheepishly, "Migosh, I should have known that bump was too soft to be a landing!"

—LAC Don MacLean

On a navy patrol ship anchored in the Philippines a thunderous crash brought the captain racing on deck. The starboard rail was a shambles of broken wood and snapped chains, and the deck was a sea of potatoes. At the top of the mast, 60 feet above the main deck, a cluster of enlisted men were trying to hide in the rigging. The captain ordered them below, then demanded an explanation.

"Ya see, sir," said one, "we had a bet. Whitey was gonna jump off the top of the mast for 40 bucks, and Alvin here sez Whitey ain't gonna clear the side of the ship. So I figgered if we pushed off a hunnert-pound sack of spuds and they hit the water then Whitey won't have no trouble."

The captain assured them that any man attempting to jump off the mast would suffer the same fate as the sack of potatoes and that, furthermore, no such antics would be allowed on his ship. "Where is Whitey now?" he demanded.

"Well, Cap'n, sir," said the spokesman, "he's down below puttin' on dry clothes. You see, Whitey don't hold much with this here scientific stuff!"

—Lt. Don B. Carroll

In spite of being urged to write frequent letters home, many airmen going through basic training at our air base neglect to do so. I had to call one such airman into my office after receiving this letter from his mother: "Dear Sir: I have not heard from my son for three weeks. If he is dead, please send his body to Route 1, Hugo, Oklahoma."

—K. W. Klages

Fighting in Korea was intense that winter, and the Tokyo Army Dispensary appealed for more and more blood donors. Men in his unit were arranging to go to the blood bank when Sergeant Joe, a veteran of

many battles, some of them with the bottle, said he'd like an appointment, too.

"Joe," the first sergeant counseled, "they'd get 75 percent alcohol and 25 percent blood out of you."

"Then I just gotta go," Joe retorted emphatically. "Got just what our poor guys in Korea need this winter — anti-freeze!"

—Patrick J. Herrity

A short while ago I had an item published in "Humor in Uniform." It appears that everyone in this town of approximately 75,000 must read the Digest, because everyone in town knew about it, with the following result:

Income from article	\$100.00
Less income-tax reserve	20.00
Gross Profit	\$ 80.00
Seventeen assorted small "touches" made as result of my windfall	\$ 53.00
Three small sums borrowed from my wife as result of her husband's windfall	11.00
Renewal dues for two organizations I had dropped on a plea of lack of funds	30.00
New outfit my wife bought as result of windfall	45.00
Household gadgets sold my wife as result of windfall	24.00
Gross Loss	\$163.00
Minus Gross Profit	80.00
Net Loss	\$ 83.00

—Contributor's name withheld

Our plane, flying at about 16,000 feet, suddenly began to descend rapidly. A Canadian soldier sitting next to me turned and said: "I beg your pardon — does the ringing in my ears annoy you?"

—Larry Adler in *Variety*

When we went to see a young friend who had just joined the army, we were impressed by the sight of some 3000 boys alike from head to toe in brand-new uniforms and similar haircuts. When we finally located our friend, I asked him how it felt to be wearing a uniform.

"Aw, it's okay," he said, "except that I feel so conspicuous!"

—Mrs. Robert Swanborn

A young air force officer was about to meet an examining board convened to interview applicants for higher commissions. He had spent all his previous evening shining his shoes, polishing his brass and thinking of all the questions he might be asked. When the fateful hour arrived he was prepared for anything — anything but the higher-than-usual door sill. To the members of the board, the young officer sprawled unceremoniously before them to present a hopeless situation. With a sigh he got up and dusted himself off. "Well," he said, "at least I fell into good company."



He received his commission.

—Orrin C. Harmon, Jr.

A non-com having a tough time shaping up a batch of army recruits finally shouted, "Close up, men, close up! If the enemy was to fire on you when you're straggling along like that, they couldn't hit a damn one of you! Close up!"

—Rudolph S. Kollar

Having depth-charged and brought to the surface a German submarine in the Atlantic, the Royal Navy sloop was picking up survivors. The commander was watching from the bridge when the U-boat captain, a blond young giant, was hauled aboard. He looked somewhat shaken, as any man might who has endured 50 depth charges. But he pulled himself stiffly to attention, looked up at the bridge, saluted and in impeccable English inquired, "You knocked, sir?"

—G. W. Austin

A Quartermaster undergoing treatment at a naval hospital was about to be released. On his last day when the doctors and the attractive young ward nurse made their daily check on the patients, the Quartermaster asked one of the doctors if he could have a souvenir to take back to the ship.

"What sort of souvenir did you have in mind?" asked the startled doctor.

"She'll do, sir," the sailor replied, pointing at the pretty nurse.

—Paul Hoskins

From a letter written by our son, who is presently receiving his air force basic training: "We were supposed to have survival training today but it was postponed on account of rain."

—Mrs. Paul Gregory

The wife of a retired rear admiral was asked what effect a navy career had on marriage. "During the 30 years we spent in the navy," she replied, "my husband was home only half the time. Either way you look at it, you're guaranteed a happy marriage at least 50 percent of the time."

—Maj. A. B. Montagne

Situations Wanted ad in the Kokomo, Ind., Tribune: "Ex-air force tail gunner desires civilian counterpart of AF job. Experienced on B-29, B-36 and B-52 fire-control systems. Can operate and maintain .50-cal. machine guns and 20-mm. cannons. Wonderful opportunity for small airlines to eliminate their competition. Have parachute, will fly."

I came down with rheumatic fever while serving in the navy, and found the long bed rest as tedious as did my fellow patients. One day when we kept hopping out of bed at every opportunity, the nurse warned us that she would be forced to "ground" us if we didn't behave.

It seemed a meaningless threat, but we soon found out what she meant by "grounding" us. The next time she left the ward, the bottoms of our pajamas went with her.

—Allen Lindenberg

When I was in military service in India, the drinking in lonely garrisons was sometimes quite earnest. One colonel attended a particularly bibulous celebration. In the early hours of the morning his junior officers, aroused by cries of agony, rushed to his room and found the colonel in bed, his forehead beaded with sweat. "You'll have to send for the doctor," he cried. "I'm paralyzed from the waist down."

The doctor came and pulled back the bedclothes. He bowed his head for a moment while his face changed from its soothing professional calm to the rich, suffused purple of suppression — he was only a captain. Then he pointed.

The colonel had both feet in one leg of his pajama trousers.

—John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger* (Viking)



The Merry Life of Kanonier Schmidt

Condensed from
The Atlantic
Monthly

Joseph Wechsberg

One of the most delightful
hoaxes of recent times—
and one that saved many lives

Author of "Looking
for a Bluebird,"
"The Continental
Touch," etc.

Elfried Schmidt is a streetcar conductor in Vienna. A thin, sad-looking man with a boyish face and gentle eyes, Schmidt speaks in a cautious voice, as if he were forever afraid of people. Yet this mild Austrian perpetrated one of the most fantastic hoaxes of modern times. Using Hitler's technique—the bigger the lie, the better its chance of being believed—he succeeded in making the Gestapo, the Nazi Party and the German Army so ridiculous that when he was finally caught the authorities' only concern was to hush up the story.

When I called at the modest cold-water flat where Schmidt lived with his wife and three children, the walls of one room were covered with blueprints and photographs of streetcars. Schmidt showed me a book in which he had written down descriptions of all streetcars ever used in Vienna. It was this enthusiasm for streetcars that started him on his strange adventure.

The story begins in 1938 in a village 20 miles from Vienna that I shall call Rampersdorf. Elfried Schmidt's uncle was the parish priest. Elfried and his mother lived at the rectory. It was a few months after the *Anschluss* and the local Nazis were exuberant. If a person didn't like a man or wanted his shop, all he had to do was denounce him to the Gestapo as an "enemy of the people." The Gestapo took care of the rest. The Nazis hated the village priest, and they didn't like Schmidt's mother, either. She was rumored to have helped refugees across the nearby Hungarian border.

Schmidt, then 19 and an outspoken anti-Nazi, worked as a locksmith's apprentice. There had been no money to send him to the Technical University so he could become an engineer, but for years he had haunted the streetcar terminals in Vienna, studying cars, tracks and switches, and in the hall of the rectory hung a large blueprint of a diesel-electric rail-car he had designed. Elsa, the girl whom he hoped to marry someday, often exclaimed, "What a pity, Elfried, that you didn't become an engineer!"

"I guess what started me off," Schmidt told me thoughtfully, "were the rumors that the Nazis were going to send my uncle to a concentration camp. I sat up nights wondering how I could help him. It had to be something to make the Gestapo afraid of me. Then I got a wild idea: could I tell them that I had made an important invention which had been welcomed by the Nazis? Why, I might even have myself made an engineer who had been decorated by Hitler himself. The more I thought of the fantastic scheme, the better I liked it."

The next day Schmidt went to Vienna; he returned a few days later with several rubber stamps and a number of astonishing letters. In the first letter, of which there was only the carbon, Schmidt asked the German State Railroad "to consider the enclosed technical drawing." The reply informed Schmidt that the drawing of his diesel rail-car had been forwarded

with a recommendation to the Transport Ministry in Berlin. There was also a letter from the German State Railroad informing Schmidt that the ministry had approved his car and that a large factory had been assigned to produce it.

"In our Catholic Youth Organization," Schmidt told me, "we'd had correspondence with the Transport Ministry and used a rubber stamp for the address. I cut off the words 'An das' [To the] and used the rest as letterhead. With this letterhead it wasn't difficult to order the other rubber stamps."

Back home, Schmidt marked his blueprint with several official-looking stamps saying INCOMING, CONSIDERED and APPROVED and added some illegible signatures. That afternoon he learned from a friend that his uncle might be arrested at any moment.

The blueprint and the letters were not sufficient to impress the Gestapo. Schmidt typed a letter in which the University of Berlin informed Elfried Schmidt that he had been awarded the title *Ingenieur Honoris Causa*. Herr Engineer Schmidt was ordered to present himself on August 25 at 11 a.m. at the Reichs Chancellery in Berlin to be received by the Führer.

"My uncle, calm as ever, read the letter carefully and gave me a strange look," Schmidt said. "An hour later the whole village knew of the great honor that had been bestowed upon me. My uncle was not arrested."

On August 24 Schmidt left for Berlin where he spent a few days sight-seeing and writing postcards home about his visit with the Führer. It occurred to him that he should have a diploma. So he bought a piece of cardboard decorated with a laurel wreath, surrounding the words HONORARY DIPLOMA. Schmidt wrote his name and new title on the diploma, added an impressive stamp with swastika and eagle, and scribbled several signatures.

Rampersdorf was in an uproar. Leading Nazis wanted to shake the hand that had touched the

Führer's. The Town Council gave a big party in his honor at which Schmidt was asked to describe his visit.

"What did you tell them?" I asked.

Schmidt shook his head as if even now it seemed hard to believe. "I said, 'The door opened and I found myself face to face with our dearly beloved Führer.' I described how Hitler had come toward me, smiling benevolently, like a father; how he had listened to me, his arms folded across his chest, as I had seen in many photographs. I told how he had conferred on me the title of honorary engineer. When they asked me what Hitler looked like, face to face, I looked sort of bewitched and said, 'I suppose he looks just the way you imagine.'

"A few women started to cry and the men blew their noses. They looked at me with such stupid, wide-eyed admiration that I couldn't help adding that the Führer had said to me, 'My dear Schmidt, if you ever need anything, just get in touch with me.' I also implied that Hitler had given me his secret telephone number."

Schmidt shook his head again. "It sounds idiotic, but they swallowed every word of it."

Two days later Schmidt met a classmate, Peter, who asked him how he had addressed the Führer. Schmidt shrugged. "I said, 'Heil, Herr Reichskanzler.'"

"That's funny," said Peter. "My father once went to a big official reception, and all guests were instructed to say, *Heil, Mein Führer.*"

"Maybe they didn't instruct me because they knew I hadn't been a Nazi before," Schmidt replied.

"Maybe," said Peter, doubtfully. "I must tell my father."

Schmidt went home with wobbly knees. He had to do something quickly. One thing could help: a uniform, the more resplendent and fantastic the better. In Vienna Schmidt bought two shoulder straps corresponding to the rank of major in the German Army. In the shop, a magnificent silver *fourragère* for staff

officers took his fancy. The clerk asked whether he had a military purchase permit. Schmidt replied that he needed the insignia "for a show." He bought the silver cord and a swastika arm band with silver edge, worn only by very high Party dignitaries. In another shop he purchased a cap with rich silver trimming.

Back home, he sewed the *fourragère* on the wrong (left) side of his dinner jacket, and put one of the major's shoulder straps on his left shoulder. "I wanted to have a uniform such as no one else in Germany wore. Then no one could accuse me of impersonating an officer," Schmidt said.

Schmidt walked around for a day in the village, just long enough to impress people, then departed for Vienna. At the railroad station a soldier standing with his arm around a girl saw Schmidt, snapped to attention and gave Schmidt a smart salute. In Vienna he was respectfully saluted by three colonels and various staff-officers. He began to enjoy himself.

Many of Schmidt's friends seemed to be in trouble and came to him for help. Schmidt did his best. He designed an identity card according to which "*Ingenieur Honoris Causa E. Schmidt*" had been awarded the silver honor cord by the Führer. Subordinate organs of the Party were ordered by the Führer to give Schmidt "all needed aid and assistance." The card never failed him. When he heard that Herr Huber, a friend of his mother's, had been sent to Dachau, he boldly walked into the office of the Nazi Kreisleiter of Vienna's Tenth District, a man widely feared, and threw his card on the table.

"I assumed a harsh, superior air," Schmidt related, "and said I wanted to know why Huber had been sent to Dachau. The Kreisleiter replied meekly that Huber had been arrested for 'antisocial' behavior. 'I happen to know that Huber was denounced by a personal enemy who wanted to get hold of his firm,' I said. 'The Führer told me only last week that he doesn't approve of such action. I expect to see the

Führer in Berlin on Thursday or Friday, and unless this matter is straightened out I will have to report you directly to him.'

"The Kreisleiter's face took on the color of rancid butter. He said he was very sorry, he hadn't known all the facts.

"Kreisleiter," I told him, 'I want Huber to report to my apartment within 48 hours.' And I walked out.

"A few days later Huber and his wife safely crossed into Hungary. In all, I helped about 40 people across the border."

On November 23, 1938, Schmidt was drafted for the Luftwaffe. As a recruit, Kanonier Schmidt got the rough treatment given privates in every army. Then one day his classmate Peter came to warn him. "My father thinks the whole business about your engineer's title and the silver cord is a swindle," Peter said. "He says he wants to check up on you in Berlin."

Somehow Schmidt managed to seem unperturbed. "Thank you," he said with sarcasm. "If that's why you came, you can go right back to Rampersdorf. Heil Hitler!" He turned on his heel and walked out.

He didn't sleep that night. Something had to be done to convince the people back home, once and for all. The next day, before going home on Christmas leave, Schmidt called up *Das Kleine Volksblatt*, a widely circulated newspaper, and said he could give them an interesting story. On December 22, 1938, the *Volksblatt* published a sensational article about him: the silver honor cord had been bestowed by the Führer "only upon three other persons from Austria"; Schmidt's new diesel rail-car was "twice or three times as fast as older models." The article caused a terrific sensation in Rampersdorf. Even Peter's father had no further doubts.

Back at his military unit at the end of the Christmas holiday, Schmidt was called into the battery office. There he found himself facing the battery commander and a dozen junior officers. The captain placed his hand on Schmidt's shoulder. "My dear Schmidt," he

said with a big smile. "Why didn't you tell us?"

Schmidt remained cautiously standing at attention. Maybe this was a trap. Then he spied a copy of the *Volksblatt* on the captain's desk. "I wanted no favors, sir. I want to do my duty like any other soldier."

The captain rubbed his hands in delight. "Another proof, gentlemen, of the foresight of our Führer who singled out this Kanonier among millions."

"Heil Hitler!" shouted Schmidt. Everybody clicked heels and saluted.

"At ease!" said the captain. "Kanonier Schmidt, what were your duties up to now?"

"I've been shoveling snow," Schmidt said.

There was a moment of embarrassed silence, then the captain cleared his throat. "Well, that's over now. Kanonier Schmidt, you are freed of all military duties. You'll have a room for your special work. And you will wear the silver honor cord over your uniform." Schmidt thanked him loftily and departed.

"I didn't even bother to sleep in the barracks," he said to me. "I stayed at my apartment in Vienna and arrived at the barracks after 8 a.m., like a colonel. When I approached the gate, the sentry would call out the guard of honor, which was done only for the garrison commander and general officers."

A few weeks later Schmidt was transferred and assigned to the office of Colonel-General Eduard von Löhr. The general told him that the German secret service had got hold of certain drawings of foreign aircraft engines. Schmidt was to study them and point out "parts of specific interest."

"I was frightened to death," Schmidt said to me. But he replied coolly that he knew nothing of aircraft engines, being a rail specialist.

Then came another blow. The general said a man of Schmidt's abilities should be made an officer. Promotions to officers were handled by Berlin and Schmidt knew that, if Göring's Air Ministry started to investigate, the bubble would burst. He tried to play modest, but the general said he had already

written a memorandum to the authorities. It was this memorandum that caused Schmidt's downfall.

"But for a while I was a big man at headquarters," Schmidt said. "I set up a model railroad in my office, and the general, the colonel in charge of Secret Projects and other high officers came to play with it. After a while I decided I needed a new uniform, so I bought some black cloth of the kind reserved exclusively for the SS and explained my wishes to the regimental tailor. The jacket was like a diplomat's gala tunic. On the lapels I had embroidered a self-designed emblem with the initials of the Technical University. The silver *fourragère* remained on the left side. I wore gala infantry trousers and an air-force cap. Only Göring could have designed a more beautiful uniform.

"When I first faced the general in my operetta costume," Schmidt continued, with a chuckle, "the poor idiot was so fascinated he said I could have his private automobile whenever I needed it. I took the car and drove straight out to Rampersdorf. You should have seen the faces of the people as they stared at the car with the general-staff license plate. When my mother saw me, I could stand it no longer. I told her everything. She cried, but I assured her that no one would ever dare harm her or my uncle."

The merry life of Kanonier Schmidt came to an end on February 16, 1939, when he was ordered to report at the general's office.

Behind a long table sat the general, looking flustered, and several high-ranking military procurators of the Luftwaffe Court. "Tell us how you got that title of engineer," the general began.

Schmidt decided impertinence was still the best policy. "I'm not used to such treatment," he said arrogantly. "Maybe I'd better telephone the Führer. As you know, he gave me his private phone number."

"That's not true! The procurators have checked up on you. You are under arrest. We know you are a spy."

"A spy?" Schmidt said, flabbergasted. The penalty for espionage was death.

He was taken to the military prison in Floridsdorf. "I decided that the only way to save my neck was to convince the procurators that a love affair was behind the whole business," he told me. "One night my jailer said that the prisoner in the next cell was going to be released in the morning. I wrote a passionate letter to my fiancée, Elsa: 'I did it all for you, my beloved. Remember how you often wished that I could become an engineer? And now they say I am a spy. How can I make them believe that all I wanted was to impress you, dearly beloved?'"

The letter was smuggled to the prisoner in the next cell, who agreed to surrender it to the sentry at the gate, saying that he'd been asked to transmit it to Elsa but didn't want to become an accomplice to this crime. Everything worked fine and the letter promptly landed on the desk of the chief procurator.

On May 25 Schmidt appeared before the Luftwaffe Court. It was a strange trial. The judges frequently giggled. Even the chief procurator had trouble keeping a straight face as Schmidt told how he had tried in vain to impress Elsa, whose father "thought she was too good for an ordinary locksmith apprentice." So he had decided to become an engineer. The diploma was unrolled as exhibit A. The presiding judge burst into laughter.

The trial was over in two hours. The indictment of espionage had been dropped. Schmidt was found guilty of "forging an official diploma" (four weeks of prison), of "unjustified use of an academic title" (four weeks), of "insolently exploiting the name of the Führer" (four months). In view of the defendant's good conduct, three months of preliminary arrest would be deducted. "I suppose they had orders from higher up to kill the affair quickly," Schmidt said to me.

When Schmidt was released from military prison, he returned to the Luftwaffe and served throughout

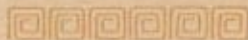
the war. In 1945 he took a job as streetcar motorman in Vienna. He eventually became a conductor. He still finds time for his inventions. His self-adjusting truck for streetcars has received an Austrian patent.

As Schmidt was finishing his story, his wife called to him. "Elfried! If we want to catch a little sunshine, we'd better go."

Schmidt pointed to a wedding picture which showed him wearing his fantasy uniform. "We were married in 1940," he said. "I hated the very sight of the uniform by that time, but the army forced me to wear it for my wedding so the people in the village wouldn't get suspicious — they didn't know the truth then."

"Anyway, Elsa did marry you, without an engineer's title?" I said, half-jokingly. Frau Schmidt gave me a vexed glance and walked out.

There was an uncomfortable pause. Schmidt cleared his throat. "My wife's name is Helene," he said. "I—I didn't marry Elsa. Shall we go?"



Three young students were driving back to West Germany after a visit to Berlin. When they approached the Red check point before re-entering the American zone, three tough-looking Russian soldiers came out of the guardhouse and motioned for them to stop. With their hearts in their throats they obeyed.

A Red sergeant stalked over to the car and, in rudimentary English, demanded their passports. They obliged, and the sergeant went into conference with the other two soldiers. Soon he returned and growled into the car window, "Which one is Jones?"

A badly frightened boy answered, "I am Jones." The Russian looked him square in the eye, grinned and said, "Happy birthday!"

—Clark Tyler



As an ensign aboard a flagship, I was in temporary charge of the engine room when a fireman came in and proceeded to drill a hole into one of the bulkheads. To his amazement, oil started flowing out. He had drilled into a 90,000-gallon oil tank! Besides the loss of oil, there was danger of fire from the sparks of his drill.

I ordered him to shut off the drill, and then we stopped the flow of oil. As I was upbraiding him for risking lives and for the damage to the ship, I asked, "What in blazes were you doing?"

Drawing himself up to his full height, he replied righteously, "Sir, I was hanging up a safety sign!"

—John I. Allgaier

Many years ago the reluctance of seamen to sail on a Friday reached such proportions that the British government decided to prove the fallacy of the superstition. They laid the keel of a new vessel on Friday, launched her on Friday, named her H.M.S. Friday, and sent her to sea on Friday.

The scheme had only one drawback — neither ship nor crew was ever heard of again.

—Our Navy

Our new medical officer, young and very green, was doing his best to ignore the baby-blue eyes of his patient, the prettiest civil service employe in headquarters. With great dignity, he prepared to give her a routine checkup, and in the process dropped his stethoscope.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" she asked sweetly, enjoying his discomfiture.

"Of course not," he replied, collecting himself and his equipment. "Now then," he ordered in his most professional tone, "deep breathely!"

—W. W. Wright

During a visit of a destroyer to port, a lieutenant commander came up to a salesgirl at the lingerie counter of a department store and inquired about buying a housecoat for his wife.

"I don't know her exact size," he said, "but she's five foot seven, weighs 140 and is slim in the hips." He hesitated a moment, then added, "She carries most of her cargo on her upper deck."

—G. Wilma Murray

A fellow aviation cadet and I were having equal difficulty trying to master primary flight training. One day I confided to him that I'd begun to wonder if subconsciously I wasn't actually afraid to fly.

"Don't you believe it," he assured me. "I've seen you fly, and you fly like I do. And to fly that way—and still fly—that takes guts!"

—Cecil J. Wright

Senator Spessard L. Holland of Florida received a letter from a private stationed in Germany asking: "Is there anything in army regulations that says a private can't go out with a major's daughter?" The

Senator referred the problem to the Pentagon and was able to write back to the private that there was nothing in regulations to stop him from dating a major's daughter.

Soon the Senator received a thank-you note from the GI with this postscript: "Now if you'll just tell the major about it, too, everything will be all right."

—UP

During office coffee breaks an attractive young married woman was always surrounded by admiring males, a situation entirely to her liking. But despite all her efforts, the office's most handsome bachelor remained oblivious to her charms. Attempting to attract his attention one morning she asked coyly, "What is the first thing you notice about a girl, Major Davis?"

"The fourth finger of her left hand," he replied curtly.

—Jeff Holloway

A sergeant in my husband's outfit preferred a good crap game to defense bonds for investing his money. One day his lieutenant, intending to ridicule him, asked him to rise in the mess hall and explain to his buddies why he refused to buy war bonds.

"Well, sir," he said, "let's put it this way. I refuse to finance my own misery!" He sat down amid a roar of friendly laughter.

—Mrs. Ralph Schat

At a main intersection at an air force base, a huge signboard reminds pilots of the need for observing safety regulations. My favorite displayed there was:

"Descend your aircraft from above

As porcupines make love

C-A-R-E-F-U-L-L-Y"

—Mrs. W. H. Evans, Jr.

With each succeeding bombing mission to Munich in World War II the defenses seemed to grow stronger. On our third haul, the flak was worse than ever. As we began our bomb run, our B-17 was hit. A long stream of oil traced its way from No. 3 engine across the wing and out into space. The batteries between No. 3 and the fuselage were ruptured and the slip stream carried the acid across the belly and into the ball turret, forcing the gunner to abandon his position.

The usually lively chatter over the interphone ceased, and there was a foreboding silence. Suddenly the phone came alive. "Waist gunner to engineer, waist to engineer, over."

In the split second it took my thumb to find the interphone button on my turret control, my imagination raced: "Casualty aboard! Fire! Oxygen leak!"

I clamped down on the button and said. "Engineer — go ahead."

A meek voice took over. "Hey, buddy, how the heck do you begin a letter of resignation?"

—G. A. Windbiel

At an army base, the mess sergeant had planted shrubbery and grass outside the dining hall. But try as he would, the sergeant could not keep the men off the grass. In desperation, beside the little three-by-four inch "Keep off the Grass" sign he placed a large sign about four feet square. An arrow pointed to the small sign with a warning: "DON'T TRIP OVER THE SIGN."

—James D. Andrews

When an attractive and shapely young WAVE lieutenant arrived at a naval staff unit in Tokyo, the delighted sailors promptly suggested a new rank for her: "Rear Admirable."

—Donald L. Gunnels

As a clerk I had to see that the rest rooms were kept clean and the paper-towel dispensers full. One afternoon the door marked "OFFICERS" opened, and the base commander stalked toward me. His dripping hands were mute testimony that I had been derelict in my duty. Quietly I came to attention and waited for the chewing that was sure to follow. The colonel glared. Then, silently, he walked behind me, jerked out my shirttail and deliberately and thoroughly dried his hands.

—Capt. James R. Whitmore



Two buddies and I still chuckle over the time we were home on leave together: we decided to go to morning service at the church we had all attended. The pastor noticed us, and when the time came for announcements, he asked us to stand. "I think," he said, "we ought to consider these young men who are prepared to go out and give their lives for our country. I want you to take a good look at these young men. They're what stands between us and the enemy! Let us pray."

—Francis P. Conner

The men of the unit I commanded in Korea received permission to pin up pictures of their girl friends on their tent frames. Soon each soldier had put up a snapshot of the girl he left behind — except for one homesick farm boy who elected to display a framed picture of his tractor!

—Maj. David H. Hunter

For some time I had dated two air force sergeants, Mike and George. Then, for no apparent reason, Mike suddenly dropped me. Later I ran into him in the service club and asked what had happened.

"Oh," he replied, "I can't call you any more or even dance with you. You see, I lost you to George in a poker game."

—Mrs. D. D. McNeese

An army sergeant who had a remarkable record for getting volunteers reported to the company commander with a whole platoon of eager volunteers for an unpleasant chore. Asked the secret of his success, the sergeant said, "It's very simple, sir. I just volunteered what would happen if they didn't."

—From an editorial in
The Wall Street Journal

The wind was whipping around our destroyer at 50 knots, and the water was sweeping across the deck. Suddenly, to our horror, the boatswain's mate was hurled against a hatch cover and then washed overboard. Almost instantly a huge, broad-shouldered Negro seaman jumped into the churning water, grabbed the boatswain's limp body and brought him alongside.

When we got them aboard and the victim began to breathe again, I noticed that his rescuer was shivering so hard that I could have sworn he was shaking the whole ship. "Why don't you go below and hit the sack?" I asked. "You'll freeze to death standing there like that."

"Oh, I'm n-not c-c-cold, sir. I-I'm just sc-scared."

"But you just gave a superb exhibition of bravery. You can't be scared."

"B-but — but, s-sir," he said, "I c-can't swim!"

—Contributor's name withheld

The last thing jet pilots driving their cars out of the Naval Air Station in St. Louis, Mo., see is this sign: "ENTERING DANGER AREA. PUBLIC HIGHWAY. GOOD LUCK!"

—M. C. Pierce

Col. Charles R. Codman, who served as Gen. George S. Patton's aide, tells about the time they were charging into Germany when the man of blood and guts noticed two enterprising GIs in the friendliest colloquy with two young ladies — an idyllic roadside group.

"Stop the car!" roared Patton.

The car slewed to the grassy slope of the Autobahn.

"What the this-that-and-the-other do you mean by fraternizing with those German the-other-this-and-thats?" the irate general wanted to know.

The more nonchalant of the American citizen soldiers disengaged himself from his share of the conquest.

"Sir," he said, "these are two Russian ladies who have lost their way. We are trying to learn their language so as to direct them properly."

General Patton glared. For a moment or two he was unbelievably silent. Finally he turned and got back into his car. "Okay," he said. "You win. That's really a new one!"

—From Charles Poore's *New York Times*
review of *Drive* (Atlantic-Little, Brown)

A censor in World War I in France told me about coming upon a letter written by one of the men to his wife back home:

"Stop those nagging letters! You are 3000 miles away and it don't do no good. Do let me enjoy this war in peace!"

—Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days* (Harper)

The captain of a ship I was on in World War II had a reputation for giving so many and such confusing orders that he was referred to by the crew as "Old Smoke Signals." On one occasion, trying to dock when wind and tide were full and strong, he was driving the engine-room crew frantic with his rapid-fire speed and direction changes. Finally from a harassed junior engineering officer came the plea:

"For Gawd's sake, captain, make up your mind! We're 14 signals behind already!"

—M. W. Gillespie

It was my job to examine applicants for MP duty. The most important part of the examination was a hypothetical oral question: "Suppose you are on the police force. You are alone in a patrol car and a gang of desperate criminals in another car is chasing you on a deserted road at 60 m.p.h. What would you do?"

One applicant promptly replied: "Seventy!"

He got the job.

—Sgt. Regis H. Price

While serving in the navy I was having some much delayed dental work done. On about the sixth trip I was greeted by a navy dentist who surprised me by saying, "Now if I hurt you, be sure to tell me." All during the appointment he kept asking, "How does that feel?" and "Does this hurt?" Finally I said to him, "I've been coming here for weeks and no one has cared if he hurt me or not. You're the first navy dentist who considered the patient's feelings."

"Oh," he replied, "I don't care about your feelings—it's just that I'm getting discharged next week and I'm trying to regain my civilian touch."

—Capt. J. R. Luckett

Doing my Christmas shopping I ran across a toy bagpipe. It seemed an ideal present for the young son of one of my brother officers; so I sent it to him with a card: "Love to Peter from Uncle Jock."

About ten o'clock on Christmas morning, I was awakened by a knock on my door at Bachelor Officers Quarters. There stood my young friend, dressed in his Sunday best, with suitcase and bagpipe. From his neck hung a card: "To Uncle Jock with love from Peter's Parents."

—Col. John T. L. D. Gabbert

I was bedfast in hospital with a full-length cast on my right leg. The scuttlebutt one afternoon was that a famous movie star was to visit our ward. I had been given a sleeping pill, so just before I dozed off I told my bunkmate, "Be sure to wake me if Betty Grable or Lana Turner comes through!"

Several hours later I awoke and asked my bunkmate if the visit had materialized. "Just after you went to sleep," he said.

"Then why didn't you wake me up?" I demanded angrily.

He pointed to my cast.

In bright red lipstick was written, from knee to ankle: "SORRY. IT WASN'T BETTY GRABLE."

JIMMY DURANTE."

—Clyde E. Weeks, Jr.

Efficiency reports can make or break an officer's career. As a result, faults in an otherwise good officer are often camouflaged under a pile of dialectics. One efficiency report praised its subject in glowing terms. Adjectives flowed like wine at an Italian wedding. But the final sentence read, "He has a tendency to become confused when giving conflicting orders."

—Alan G. Easton



On airborne maneuvers a friend of mine making a practice jump was blown off course and missed the target area entirely. As he drifted down under his chute's white canopy, he saw a clearing in the trees and headed for it as best he could. In the clearing

were a cabin and about a dozen children of assorted ages. The oldest, seeing my friend drifting down under his white cloud, ran for the house, shouting, "Paw! Paw! Git the shotgun! The stork's bringing 'em full-grown now!"

—Sheldon D. Goldstein

In hospital in England I had a young corporal as a wardmate. Although his body was racked with fever from a serious case of pneumonia, he never lost his sense of humor. In an attempt to find an antibiotic which would defeat the virus, the doctors prescribed countless injections administered in the usual fleshy place. Every four hours around the clock, he got "shot."

One morning the nurse rolled him over, exposed the target, then roared with laughter. Affixed to his backside, on a strip of adhesive tape, were the words: "ANOTHER WEAK END SHOT TO HELL!"

—Andrew J. Offt

A shiny new second lieutenant was standing in front of a cigarette machine, going through his pockets looking for the right change. Just then a young non-com walked by. "Say, airman," asked the lieutenant, "do you have change for a half?"

"Yeah, I believe so," said the airman, reaching for his pocket.

"Airman, is that the way you address an officer?" barked the lieutenant. "Now, let's try that again. Do you have change for a half?"

"No, sir," was the snappy reply.

—Delmer M. Morris

One day at a naval hospital where I was stationed as an X-ray technician, a young seaman timidly asked for an X ray of his chest. I asked the boy for his doctor's consultation slip.

"I don't have one," he said. "I wanted the X rays for myself."

Swallowing my exasperation, I asked what he wanted to do with radiographs of his chest.

"Well," he said, "next week's my pop's birthday, and I just want to show him my heart's in the right place."

—R. J. Gonzalez

An officer in a class at a naval gunnery school had made himself unbearable by continually bragging about his feminine conquests. He delighted in telling about how many girls he had, scattered around the world. Then came the morning that he announced he'd become engaged the night before and would soon be married. "I wonder," he mused, "how many girls are going to be disappointed?"

Without hesitation, an officer voiced the sentiments of the entire group. "One," he said. "Only one!"

—Bob Womack

When we were stationed at tiny Johnston Island, some 700 miles from Hawaii, many of the workmen employed there were Hawaiian natives. Most of them loved to eat octopus. They would catch a bucketful, then wash them and pound them for at least an hour to tenderize them. To save themselves work, the Hawaiians hit on an ingenious idea. But before long, much to their chagrin, the man in charge of the local launderette put up a large sign: "PLEASE DO NOT WASH ANY MORE OCTOPUSES IN THE BENDIXES."

—Mrs. Raydelle C. Floyd

After two and a half years abroad, our battalion despaired of ever getting home. Then a member of our company was returned home because of a family emergency. The next morning a homemade service flag appeared above the door of his tent with the inscription: "One of our boys is overseas."

—Kenneth W. Roberts

In a naval mess a petty officer was consulting a friend about what size sweater to buy for his girl. After much discussion, the friend finally said, "Oh well, you can't go wrong. If it's too big, she'll be flattered, and if it's too small, she'll wear it!"

—Lt. Comdr. Hilliard H. Huggins

A soldier called his commanding officer to request an extension of his and his buddy's leave. "Johnson wants ten more days because he's getting married and wants to go on a honeymoon," he explained. "And I want 15 more days."

He was asked why he wanted the 15 days. "I'm getting married, too," he replied, "and I need the extra five days to find a girl to marry me."

—Contributor's name withheld

Our destroyer was scheduled for a long foreign cruise after months of duty in home waters. When the crew heard about it, the officers were besieged with requests for transfer, all based on compelling personal reasons. After a few days of this, we thought we had heard of every misfortune or impending misfortune that could threaten a navy man and his family. But we reckoned without our chief carpenter, who came up with this: "I don't want to go overseas. Reason: My wife is not pregnant, and I don't want to leave her in that condition."

—Lt. E. B. Clark

The instructor was giving a class on unarmed self-defense. After presenting several different situations to the class, he asked a student, "What steps would you take if someone were coming at you with a knife?"

"Big ones!" he replied.

—Pte. Ernest F. Zinie

After a strenuous ten-day exercise, a group of off-duty Sixth Fleet officers were gathered in the shade on a tiny island in the Mediterranean. A small refreshment stand had been set up, and by the time the chaplain from one of the carriers had arrived all the seats were taken except those around one table sitting in lone splendor atop a small rise. The chaplain sat down there.

Up hustled a flag lieutenant. "Sorry, sir, these seats are reserved for the staff."

Wearily the chaplain asked, "Whose staff?"

"Why, Sixth Fleet, CarDiv Six, CruDiv . . ."

"Son," replied the padre, "I'm on God's staff, and until someone comes along senior to Him, I'm not moving."

—C. H. Morgan, Jr., in *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*

On our return trip from Germany, my wife, three children and I were flying from Ireland to Newfoundland when our plane lost an engine. The pilot decided to return to Ireland. Since most of the dependents were asleep, there was no panic. My wife, who was awake and sitting on the side overlooking the engine that had stopped, remained calm. After we landed, I congratulated her for not showing any alarm.

"Oh, my gosh!" she exclaimed, turning pale. "I thought they just turned it off to save gas!"

—Herbert N. Jeffrey

We were waiting behind two young airmen at a busy street corner when a bright red sports car passed, driven by a striking blonde dressed to obtain maximum benefit from the Florida sun. As the airmen's gaze followed the car through the intersection, one remarked, "Now, there's the car I've always wanted."

"Boy, you can have the car," said the other airman. "All I want is its guidance system!"

—J. E. Robertson



It was a quiet game of chess in the officers' club until the young captain pointed out an illegal move to his opponent, the commandant. The general thundered his disagreement, and colonels and majors shuddered behind their magazines. But the captain quietly stuck to his guns.

"We'll let Lieutenant Carpenter decide," the general said, as the depot unofficial chess champ walked in.

"You're wrong, sir," Carpenter told the general with a grin.

"Wrong? You don't even know what the point under discussion is," the general said.

"No, sir," replied Carpenter. "But all these gentlemen play chess, and if you were right, they'd all have sprung to your defense."

—Bob Hardin

One of the oldest men in my squadron, an Irishman who was always in scrapes because of too great a fondness for whiskey, was still a private. But when we got to New Guinea his talents as a plumber and the absence of John Barleycorn made him a valuable man; so to encourage him I promoted him to private first class. The next day, in censoring the mail, I found this in his letter to his "sainted" mother: "A great honor has been bestowed on me. I have received a great promotion and only 12 more will make me a general."

—Col. John J. Prause

In Celle, Germany, the British military hospital was located quite a distance from the dependents' housing area and a special bus was run by the British forces to take expectant mothers for their weekly checkups. The young mothers-to-be named their military conveyance "The Blunder Bus."

—Jo Hunter Stewart

It was a scorching day the first time I attempted the gentle art of gold-bricking. A field maneuver simulating battle conditions was planned. I stuffed a book into my pocket, slipped out of line as the company passed a few shade trees, and spent a pleasant afternoon reading.

As the company returned to camp I quietly fell in with them for the usual critique by the company commander. He pointed out each and every military sin committed by members of the company during the maneuver. When he called, "Fahnestock!" I was sure the game was up and that I was in for at least a dishonorable discharge. Quaking, I stepped forward.

"Fahnestock," he said, "you're the *only* man in this whole company I didn't see doing anything *wrong* today!"

—Charles W. Fahnestock


In basic training we were constantly told by the cadre, "Use your head." But whenever a trainee did something on his own, he was invariably wrong and was asked who told him to do it. The hapless trainee would usually answer, "I thought—" only to be told, "You're not supposed to think!"

This inconsistency bothered me and in our last week of training, I got up nerve enough to ask a sergeant how we were to use our heads if we weren't supposed to think. "Son," he said, "when you learn that, you'll be a general!"

—John A. Healy

A particularly scruffy private in my platoon was forever being bawled out by the sergeant because of the state of his uniform. Gazing at him in disgust one morning, the sergeant exclaimed, "Smith, I don't mind your not cleaning your cap-badge, really I don't, but *please* weed it now and again!"

—Frank G. Ellis



When I reported for duty with the 90th Bombardment Squadron in 1944 on the island of Biak, which is off the New Guinea coast, very close to the equator and very hot, I noticed a large group of soldiers looking intently into the sky. I did the same, and caught faint sun-flashes on the body of an airplane. Figuring it was a Japanese plane and that this would be my first experience under enemy fire, I wondered why the soldiers didn't take cover. As the plane came lower and lower, I became more and more frightened. But instead of attacking us, the four-engined bomber made a graceful landing and everybody ran toward it.

It had taken the week's beer-ration for the Group up to 30,000 feet for an hour to cool it off.

—Donald Hough

Halfway round the world, Major James Beardsley reports, one of the B-52's on the historic non-stop flight slowed down to allow the tanker plane to get into position above it. Refueling in the air is a tricky operation and the crew of the B-52 was a bit tense. But as the flying boom was lowered and got close to the plane, tension vanished. At the end of the boom was a sign: "We Give Trading Stamps."

—Donald W. Stewart

During primary training with the RCAF, I was flying a light trainer when I had an uncomfortably close shave with another plane. My instructor and I were still shaky when we landed, but I had almost forgotten the incident when I returned to the barracks that evening. There I found a neatly lettered card taped to the wall above my desk: "A mid-air collision could spoil your whole day."

—Michael Wetherley

After a three-year tour of duty, my son, Pat, was about to be discharged from the Marine Corps as a first lieutenant. A couple of days before the deadline he was out on a field problem with an old Marine sergeant who had spent most of his life in the Corps. Pat was eagerly looking forward to those final papers and was chattering about his plans.

Finally the old veteran could take no more. "Hell, Lieutenant," he said, "you don't want to leave the Corps and go back outside. There ain't nobody in charge out there!"

—Joseph E. Doran

We soldiers were at bat in a hotly contested baseball game with our officers, when a private hit what looked like a single to short right field. Instead of stopping at first, however, he foolishly started a wild dash for second. Realizing, then, that he couldn't make it, he scrambled back toward first. Now he was being chased in a rundown between the lieutenant playing first and the colonel playing second.

It looked like a sure out, but just as the lieutenant flipped the ball back to the colonel, the private snapped to attention, saluting the colonel. Automatically, the colonel snapped a salute back — and muffed the catch.

—Cpl. Bill O'Brian in *True*

Having posted a recruit on guard duty at the entrance to an indoor swimming pool one night, I went back a little later to check up. I instructed him to read the rules governing the use of the pool, which were prominently displayed at the entrance, and to be prepared to enforce them. "Corporal," he said, "I've already read 'em. I'm just waitin' for my chance to enforce rule number four on a Friday night."

Scrutiny of the nearby bulletin board revealed that rule number four read: "Bathing suits will not be worn in the pool at any time." A separately posted notice read: "The use of the pool on Friday nights is reserved to officers and their ladies."

—Marshall Smelser in *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*

To fill out the regimental boxing team, a soldier was prevailed upon by his buddies to enter the divisional tournament. He had never been in a fight in his life and looked forward to his first bout with ill-concealed panic.

When he came back to the barracks after the fight, he was in terrible shape. "You poor guy," said the man in the next bunk.

"That's not the half of it," gasped the boxer. "I gotta fight again. I won."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

Martha Raye was visiting an army camp during World War II, and a colonel was staging an inspection for her. As they walked past the men, he barked: "Show that shoeshine!" "Let's see those fingernails!" and all the usual commands. In the silence after one recruit had been ordered, "Stick out your tongue!" Martha Raye's inimitable voice boomed out, "Now, turn it over!"

—Henry D. Hukill

The first part of this I know is true; perhaps the rest could never be properly checked. But when I was a Red Cross hospital worker during World War II, navy doctors and nurses gloated over the case of a certain admiral who, bedded snugly in hospital with nothing worse than athlete's foot and non-critical complications, spent his time chasing nurses, "pulling rank" and harassing the overworked medical staff. This went on until the day an enterprising young seaman inmate borrowed a surgical gown, cap and face mask, swept into the admiral's room with a brisk "Good morning," glanced at the chart, ordered the patient over on his stomach and proceeded to take his temperature.



Before he could finish the job, however, the man in white explained that he had another urgent case to attend to and left, gravely warning the grumbling seadog not to move until his return.

One hour later the nurse, making her rounds, froze in consternation on the officer's doorstep. "Admiral!" she gasped. "What—what happened?"

"Taking my temperature," the admiral growled. "Anything unusual about taking an admiral's temperature?"

"N-no, sir," the startled nurse managed to reply, "but, Admiral — with a daffodil?"

—G. J. G.

We were on a steaming coral island astride the equator during World War II. Thousands of ammu-

nition cases were lying on the beach, and our platoon had the job of hauling them inland. Hour after hour we plodded through the beach sand, our sweaty bodies bent into button hooks with the weight of the ammunition. A group of Polynesians, lolling in the shade of a coconut palm, were watching us. Each time we passed the grinning natives, the doughfoot in front of me would mutter, "Stupid, ignorant savages!" After about the sixth time, I said to him, "You shouldn't talk about those people like that."

"Those people!" he exploded. "Who's talking about those people? I mean us!"

—D. Mitchell

While stationed in North Africa, our detachment was harassed by a hard-nosed, obnoxious sergeant who believed that every efficient sergeant had to be tough. He drove us unmercifully, often saying, "Someday you eight-balls will appreciate me."

At last he received his rotation orders, and a "going-away party for the sarge" was scheduled. The sarge was overjoyed; at last he had found an outfit that appreciated him. His joy faded when he realized that his date of departure was the day *before* the party.

—Jim Eason

Two doors away from us when we lived on an air base was a most attractive young wife, who frequently appeared in her yard dressed in very short shorts and a halter. Coming out of my quarters one day, I noticed that she was working in her garden in her usual attire. While getting an eyeful, I opened my car door and got in to drive to my office. Reaching for the starter, I discovered, much to my dismay — and to the amusement of my wife, who happened to be looking out the window — that I was sitting in the back seat.

—Col. A. T. Learnard

As I sat next to a WAF officer, waiting for a meeting to begin, I was reading an article in a news magazine describing the difficulties the army and the navy were having in determining the regulation height of their female members' heels. Pointing out the article to the WAF, I asked, "How high do you like your heels?"

"Oh," she replied, "about six feet two!"

—Maj. Richard R. Thuma, Jr.

My first week of basic training was about 48 hours old when I was herded along with 20 other trainees into a long wooden building. "Roll up your sleeves," said a little blond nurse. We did, and one by one we were called into an adjoining room.

Finally it was my turn. I started in cautiously but executed a snappy "eyes right" when I caught sight of a huge picture of a scantily clad beauty. For a moment I enjoyed the view, wondering what such a picture was doing in a place so drably military.

I was still wondering when I felt two quick jabs in my left arm. I whirled in surprise to see the nurse holding two hypodermic needles.

"In the army," she said smiling, "we call it diversionary tactics."

—Thomas E. Langenfeld

During World War II I was with a group assigned to training in intelligence work. We were pretty smug at the prospect of joining such a top-drawer outfit as intelligence. Disillusionment came quickly, however. On the first day of training, the instructor began his lecture by saying, "Gentlemen, the encyclopedia lists intelligence under three headings—human, animal and military." After a short pause he added, "In that order."

—R. H. Mathers



"The Best April Fool's Joke I Ever Pulled"

By W. J. LEDERER

Author of "All the Ship's at Sea," "Last Cruise," etc.

It was the morning of April 1, 1939, and our destroyer, the USS *Appleby*, swung around her anchor in Manila Bay. In the wardroom a heated debate was under way. We officers had a problem to solve before the captain returned to the ship.

"We've got to find a way to scroggle him," said the first lieutenant. "April Fool's Day is our only chance—we may never get another legitimate shot at the old buzzard."

I should point out that we loved our commanding officer, Lt. Comdr. J. J. Sweeney. No ship ever had a better skipper. But Sweeney had a passion for practical jokes and, at one time or another, had successfully shafted all the officers on the *Appleby*. In my case, he had subscribed to a Lonely Hearts Association in my name. He intercepted replies and carried on a correspondence until I finally received a telegram from a widow with four children—saying she was flying from Arizona to Manila to marry me.

We all agreed that on this first day of April we had to hang a de luxe, extra-special gag on the old boy. The medical officer (the captain had once put a snapping beetle in his stethoscope) suggested mixing a purgative in the captain's oatmeal. The chief engineer recommended loosening the propeller nut

in the gig, so that after the captain started ashore the propeller would drop off and leave him adrift.

These, I felt, were schoolboy plots.

Here's the way I had it figured. The captain owned a home in Manila, and he delighted in having his wife and children there with him. He hated the ship's annual summer cruise to China. For one thing, it isolated him from his family; for another, it subjected him to Chinese food, which he loathed.

These facts left no doubt in my mind about how to hoax the captain. We'd send him to China. Even if he fell for it only momentarily, he'd get a terrific jolt. The other officers saw the beauty of my plan, and I was given the responsibility for its execution.

As communications officer, it was no trouble for me to fake a radio dispatch. I made up a set of authentic-looking orders detaching Commander Sweeney from the Appleby and sending him to Chungking. (Chungking, 1600 miles into the interior of China, was one of the few places where navy families were not permitted — and where one lived almost entirely on Chinese food.)

After breakfast, the communications messenger handed the captain the morning's radio traffic. In the pile was my message: LT COMDR J J SWEENEY USN DETACHED 9 APRIL AS COMMANDING OFFICER USS APPLEBY WITHOUT RELIEF AND PROCEED IMMEDIATELY CHUNGKING CHINA AS COMMANDING OFFICER USS TUTUILA.

After reading this the Old Man began cursing, spilling his coffee and working himself into a five-star temper. "They're sending me to Chungking on ten days' notice!" he roared. And he beat the deck with both feet, like a child in a tantrum.

Then he turned to the exec. "Call the gig away," he yelled. "And be damned quick about it!" When the gig came alongside the Old Man embarked for Manila. He stayed ashore all morning, returning to the ship for lunch.

He looked like a beaten man and he didn't dig into

the food with his normal relish. "It's a lousy break," he said. "My wife cried when I told her. She loves it here. But the normal tour of duty in Chungking is a year and there's no getting out of it, so I decided to send the family back to the States."

This, I thought happily, is really working.

"It's unpleasant all right," the captain continued, blowing his nose with a red bandanna handkerchief, "but there are rosy sides to everything." He smiled with obvious effort. "I was lucky enough this morning to find a man with ready cash who bought my house. As a matter of fact, I made a \$1200 profit on it." He showed us a certified check for \$17,200 from a real-estate agency.

"There's no navy transport touching Manila for six weeks," the Old Man went on, "so I'm sending the family back by commercial steamer. They sail day after tomorrow on the *Jewel of Manila*." He laid four steamer tickets on the table. "The movers are coming tomorrow."

We were beginning to see that this joke had its dangers. When should we sing out "April Fool"?

The captain kept on talking. "Of course, orders is orders. But the part that burns me is the short notice. I spoke to the admiral about it, and he's sent a stinker of a message to Washington."

"The admiral did what, sir?"

"He sent a message of protest to the Chief of the Bureau of Personnel saying that my arbitrary orders to Chungking were rude and irregular and that he should have been consulted first."

My mouth felt awfully dry. The executive officer excused himself from the table. "Well," said the Old Man, "I better start packing." And he too got up.

I followed him to his cabin and stood in the doorway while he stuffed shirts into a suitcase. "C-c-c-captain," I finally stuttered. "About your orders — I'm the guilty party. . . ."

He interrupted me, "Of course we'll have a party! And it'll be a pistol. We can start at the Army-Navy

Club, and then move over to the Manila Hotel. . . ."

"No, sir," I said. "You've misunderstood me. Your orders . . . to Chungking . . . they're phonies. It was an April Fool's joke. . . ."

The captain stomped across the cabin and placed his reddening face close to mine. "Mister," he said, "did I hear you right?"

"Y-y-yes, sir," I said.

He sat down suddenly on the edge of his bunk and groaned. "I've sold my house. I've made arrangements to send my family home. And the admiral is burning up the wires with mutinous messages to the Navy Department. Do you know the penalty for writing a false message?"

"Y-y-yes, sir," I said. "I can get a general court-martial."

"And that's no April Fool's joke!" Sweeney stormed. "You've really mucked things up with your grotesque sense of humor. But I'll give you a chance to straighten things out. I want to be fair."

He handed me three things: the check for \$17,200, the steamship tickets for his family and a copy of the message which the admiral had sent to the Bureau of Personnel. "You go to the real-estate agent," he said, "and buy my house back at no loss to me. Then go to the steamship line and get my money back on these tickets. Then go to the admiral and tell him about your little joke — and get me off the hook with him."

"Aye, aye, sir," I said.

He looked at his watch. "It's now ten to two. I'll give you until tomorrow morning to straighten things out — before I commence court-martial proceedings."

I got in the gig and went ashore. The real-estate agent already had a client who had offered him \$18,000 for the house. The place was as good as resold.

"Look," I said after an hour of bickering, "sell me the captain's house for the amount of this check. I'll pay you the extra \$800 profit out of my own pocket. I haven't got it in cash, but I'll send you 50 bucks a

month." Then I explained the situation in full. I told him that if I was court-martialed I certainly would be convicted. It was worth 800 bucks to me to get out of this scrape unscathed.

"Okay," said the agent wearily. "Here's a receipt for the captain's check. I'll send the deed around in the morning." I smothered the guy with gratitude, ran into the street and got a taxi.

At a quarter to six I arrived at the steamship line's offices. The man in charge said it was against rules to refund money on such short notice.

"There is only one person who can authorize it — the manager of our Far Eastern office, Mr. Gonzales."

"Where can I find him?"

"He's at the Polo Club throwing a cocktail party in honor of President Quezon and High Commissioner McNutt. About 300 guests. Mr. Gonzales is leaving for Hong Kong at six tomorrow morning."

It was eight o'clock when I arrived at the Polo Club. Guests in evening clothes were entering; an attendant at the door collected invitations. "Yes?" he questioned, eyeing my uniform.

"I'd like to see Mr. Gonzales. I have an important message for him."

"Sorry, only people with invitations—and in evening dress—may enter."

"Well, please page Mr. Gonzales then. I'll speak with him out here."

"Oh, no, señor," said the attendant. "Impossible."

I felt like a beggar who had been refused alms. At this miserable moment along came my friend Bessie Hackett, society editor of the *Manila Bulletin*.

"What are you doing off the *Appleby*?" she asked. I told her.

"C'mon, I've got an extra invitation at home," she said, pushing me into her car.

At home Bessie found the invitation and dragged out her brother John's evening clothes. John weighs 220 and is six feet tall. I'm five nine and weigh 150. We turned up the pants legs about a foot and pinned

them in place. There was so much excess cloth around my waist that we had to fold it over — a pleated effect. The crotch of the trousers hung a few inches above my knees; the seat flopped about my thighs like an empty potato sack. The coat hung to my knees.

Within a half hour we were back at the club. The attendant, at Bessie's urging, now let me in. Everyone gaped, then laughed. The assistant manager politely informed me that entertainers were not allowed to mix with the guests. But finally I found Mr. Gonzales. I held his Martini while he scribbled out a note saying it was okay to give a refund on the four tickets.

It was now after ten and I hadn't seen the admiral yet. I changed back into uniform and taxied over to his residence, a good ten miles away. The steward who came to the door said the admiral had turned in. His orders were that he wasn't to be disturbed unless it was something official and important.

"Call the admiral," I said, drawing the steward's attention to my one gold stripe.

Eventually the admiral, putting in his false teeth and straightening his pajamas, came down. When I told him why I was there, he exploded like a 16-inch shell hitting a fuel dump. He chewed me out from rim to rim, rushed into the next room and picked up the phone.

"You may now go back to the Appleby," he said when he returned. "I've sent a message to Commander Sweeney informing him the message to Washington has been canceled — and suggesting to him appropriate disciplinary action for you."

"Thank you, sir," I said, saluting. It was two in the morning when I got back aboard the Appleby. The captain was up and waiting.

"The admiral sent me a message. I know what happened there. How'd you make out on the other deals?"

I handed him the receipt for his house and showed him the note from Mr. Gonzales authorizing the return of his steamer money.

"Okay," he said in a kindly manner. Then, "Did

the admiral mention the disciplinary action we've decided to take with you?"

"No, sir."

He held up some papers. "These," he said, "are the outcome of your little *faux pas* this morning. It is absolutely necessary that they get into the mail tonight. The exec and I have just looked them over, and find them in good form. But as they concern you, I want you to check them for accuracy."

"Aye, aye, sir," I said, reaching for what looked like my death warrant.

The captain went on, "The motor whaleboat will take you to the fleet post office; it's alongside now — embark and shove off. Check the papers on the way ashore. If any of the facts about you are wrong, you have my permission to change them. Now hurry," he said, handing me the papers and stamped envelopes for the papers. "The mail closes in 20 minutes."

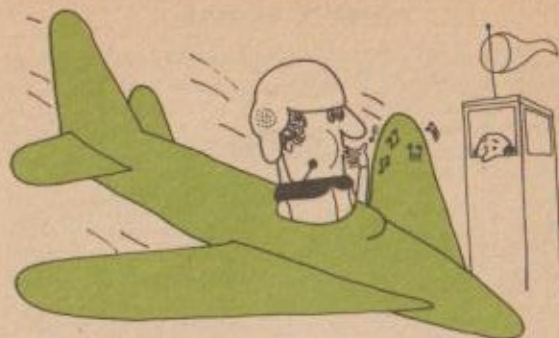
I ran topside, leaped down the accommodation ladder and into the boat. We roared away. I switched on the battle lantern which hung under the boat canopy, and spread the papers on the seat cushion.

They consisted of three letters: one to the admiral, one to the real-estate agent and one to Mr. Gonzales. Except for the addresses and salutations, they were identical:

Thank you for your co-operation in the leg-pulling job on my Communications Officer. He went for the gag — hook, line and sinker. I've manipulated some lulus in my day; but, believe me, this is the best April Fool's joke I ever pulled.

Sincerely,

J. J. Sweeney
Commanding Officer
USS Appleby



While I was in charge of the control tower at a small advanced air base in India, air traffic was unusually heavy one afternoon. Transports and fighters were constantly signaling the tower by radio, requesting permission to land or take off. In the confusion, the smaller open-cockpit craft without radios, which depend on signals flashed to them by red and green lights from the tower, were having a difficult time obtaining recognition.

Fed up with being ignored, the pilot of one small plane finally flew level with the control tower, turned off his engine, and, as he glided past, put his fingers in his mouth and whistled loudly. His unorthodox approach paid off — he promptly got his green light.

—Frank C. Byrd

When I was a clerk in an information office at Pearl Harbor, I received a call from a girl who wanted to locate her lost boy friend, a sailor. She said she had met him on Guam, and they'd fallen in love, and she had been heartbroken when he was transferred to Pearl Harbor. She didn't know his rank or rate or which base; so, slightly exasperated, I asked, "Do you know his name?"

"No," she replied, "but I'd recognize it if I heard it."

—Anne Kelly

A friend and I were discussing the behavior of today's young people. "I certainly think the boys today are better behaved and more serious-minded than they were a few years ago," I said. "For example, our house is right next to the air base, you know, and when we first moved in I couldn't go out in the yard without being whistled at by all the young airmen. But the boys stationed there now go right on about their business when I appear."

"When did you move into your house?" my friend asked.

"Oh, about 12 years ago," I answered innocently.

She began to smile. "Are you quite sure," she asked, "that it's the boys who have changed?"

—Harriet A. Tanksley

Our base commander had been receiving complaints about the behavior of the children on the school bus. One morning he boarded the bus when it came to a stop in the schoolyard. Silence fell over the youngsters as he reprimanded them. "Children, there have been complaints about your rowdy behavior while traveling on this bus. If this sort of thing keeps up, I'll be forced to bring it to the attention of your parents. Now, you wouldn't like me to do that, would you?" From the rear of the hushed bus came the meek reply, "No, Daddy."

—Stephen V. Harvey

The three cocktail lounges nearest the Pentagon in Washington are known as the Chief Joints of Staff.

—Carmen Phillips, quoted by Art Ryon in *Los Angeles Times*

We doctors' wives always say that we have to be half dead before we elicit any sympathy from our husbands. For some months during the war, my hus-

band was the sole medical officer assigned to the U. S. Naval Training School at Fort Schuyler; his varied duties included teaching, preventive medicine and care of the sick. Hurrying to prepare supper one evening, I stabbed an artery at the base of my thumb with a paring knife. My husband, who was in the kitchen at the time, quietly and efficiently applied pressure and bound up my hand. As he tied the bandage, he made his only comment. "I wish," he said wistfully, "you could have done this for my first-aid class at Fort Schuyler."

—Alison Murphy Mathews

At a large military post most of the men about to be released were wildly happy at being "liberated." Equally excited were the army recruiters who were struggling to get as many as possible to re-enlist.

The high point of the program was a talk by an old captain who obviously thought of the service as a veritable paradise. He listed benefit after benefit of army life. Pointing his finger at a private, he asked, "What do you think about it, son?"

The private answered meekly, "Sir, over a period of two years I have steeled myself to endure benefit after benefit after benefit; but frankly, sir, I'm afraid one more would just about do me in."

—Jon Purvis

We are not allowed to bring our families to Saudi Arabia. One of the bright spots in our arid, womanless existence is The Reader's Digest, airmailed by thoughtful wives.

One man had just received the January issue. Suddenly he tossed it aside in mock disgust. "Here's an article called '49 Ways to Make Marriage More Exciting,'" he said. "Looks to me like they missed rule Number One: BE THERE!"

—Maj. H. L. Somerville

During basic training, the tall, thin college boy passed with ease all the written examinations and lecture courses, but rifle qualification and physical training proved somewhat beyond his capabilities. But eventually word came that the trainee had passed his Officers' Candidate School examination.

"I hear you're going to OCS," said the big, much-decorated first sergeant. "I'm sure you'll make a fine officer. And that's the way it should be, son, because you'll never be a soldier."

—A. Silber

One of the boys in headquarters company was constantly boring his barracks mates with tales of his conquests of women. One day the corporal who had charge of the personnel records secured a blank medical report form and carefully reproduced the man's record, complete with dates, shots, signatures and all official entries, adding the remark, "This man suffers from lycanthropy." He put this with the reports of several other men in the company and casually dropped the papers on his bunk. Casanova saw them, asked if his report was among them and if he could look at it.

"Hey, what's this mean — lycanthropy?" he cried. "It says here I've got it."

No one seemed to know. Turning to the dictionary he found this definition: "Lycanthropy—madness in which one imagines himself a wolf."

We didn't hear much about his conquests after that.

—John B. Deasy

Returning from a target over France in 1943, our aircraft was hit hard by enemy flak and fighters. The left engine was knocked out, and the plane was responding to control in a very peculiar manner. Chick, our young tail-gunner, reported, "A three-

by-five hole in the left horizontal stabilizer and elevator, sir." Then he called, "Are we gonna make it home."

"No sweat, Chick," I promised.

On final approach for our landing, the aircraft skidded and slued around like a berserk bird. I fought it onto the runway and, with a sigh of relief, braked it to a stop on the taxi strip. Scrambling out, I hurried to inspect the tail and get a look at the three-by-five hole.

My jaw dropped in amazement. Practically all of the left horizontal-control surface was missing. "Chick," I boomed in disbelief, "I thought you meant inches!"

"That's what I figured," he chuckled. "But I hated to bother you with details."

—Richard S. Russell

An old hand at traveling, I had packed my nylon underwear, shirts and socks for a trip home from overseas. Also on the base were about a hundred youngsters just out of high school. Guests of the air force. They were being given the sales pitch about the glamorous life, travel and opportunities for advancement. They were staying in the officers' quarters, eating at the officers' club and altogether getting a slightly distorted view of military life.

Late one evening I was doing my daily laundry when the lieutenant in charge of the group came into the washroom with several of his charges in tow. One lad of 17 eyed my laundry and my graying hair and timidly asked if I was in service. I said yes and he asked my rank. When I confessed I was a major, the youngster looked horrified and blurted out, "Do majors have to wash their own socks?"

The lieutenant, tears in his eyes, informed me I had just set the recruiting program back at least a year.

—Benjamin Gordon

Our finances were really strained by the arrival of our fourth child. So when I discovered The Reader's Digest was offering \$100 for "Humor in Uniform," I began urging my husband to think of some anecdote from his war years. But I was completely unsuccessful. "Come now," I finally said, "surely you can think of something short and funny in the air force!"

"Sure," he remarked dryly. "My first lieutenant."

—Dorothy Stott

A very young soldier and his bride-to-be came to our manse to be married. When my husband concluded the ceremony, instead of kissing each other, the couple just stood shyly.

"You may salute your bride now," my husband said. "The ceremony is over."

To our amazement, the soldier turned and gave a very proper military salute — which the startled bride returned.

—Mildred W. Beall



As a B-47 pilot in the U.S. Strategic Air Command stationed at a base in the middle of the wind-swept plains of Kansas, I've heard thousands of gripes concerning the never-dying wind, the ever-blowing dust and the isolation. But the most original protest appeared in the want ads of the local paper. It read: "Three officers desire change of duty station. Have B-47. Will travel."

—Lt. Robert F. Darden, Jr.

At the San Juan, Puerto Rico, naval station, the brig is located in the center of the base in a pleasant cottage-type building resembling a motel. To identify the building there is an attractive sign on the front lawn: "Station Brig." Neatly suspended below this sign is a smaller one, a pointed reminder to all: "VACANCY."

—W. J. Dixon

We had just returned from overseas and were pulling our first home leave in two years. My girl met us at the station. She said she could fix up a date for my buddy, but her friend's parents were determined to meet any young man before allowing their daughter to go out with him. On the way to his date's house he rehearsed his speech and manners, hoping to impress her parents. Once there everything worked out fine until we were ready to leave. The girl's mother said, "Just make sure she's home early enough to get plenty of rest."

"Don't worry, ma'am," my friend replied. "I'll have your daughter in bed before 12."

—Roger K. Dean

On army maneuvers during World War II, I came upon a recruit who had been assigned the unpleasant duty of digging a latrine in a muddy field in the pouring rain. "Chaplain," he said as I paused for a word with him, "I don't mind givin' my life for my country, but damn all the preliminaries!"

—B. L. Rose

My navy radio crew, housed in a tent on a Normandy bluff, was trying to carry on despite heavy bombing by enemy planes. When I heard one bomb whistling through the air terrifyingly close, I bellowed, "Hit the deck!"

The bomb exploded a scant 30 feet away, showering the tent with shrapnel, rocks and dirt. We got to our feet, coughing and shaking. Remembering my training, by the dim light of a flashlight I called the roll. As I ran down the list I received a steady chorus of "Here, sir." Then I called out the last name, "Taylor." There was no answer. Fearing the worst, with my voice pitched in a higher key, I called out again, "Taylor!"

From the shadows came an answer. "That's you, sir."

—Kenneth H. Taylor

When we were stationed in northern Japan in 1948, my wife set about raising a garden. The labor officer supplied an elderly Japanese gardener who spoke no English. Using the houseboy as an interpreter, my wife painstakingly explained and demonstrated how she wanted the various items planted, fertilized, cultivated, pruned, tied up, sprayed and pampered.

In typical Japanese manner he listened intently, maintained a polite bearing and followed the instructions — to a degree. The garden emerged as the finest on the block, and my wife felt a great sense of pride and accomplishment.

One day the gardener announced apologetically through the houseboy, that he would have to leave; he was returning to his old job. After expressing her regrets and praising him for helping her raise such a good garden, my wife asked, out of politeness, what his old job was.

His answer: "Professor of horticulture at the University of Tokyo."

—Lt. Col. Robert E. Jones

A young seaman during World War II, having lied about his age to get into the navy, had second thoughts after a few days at sea. His homesickness became almost unbearable. Seeking out the chaplain,

the distraught sailor poured forth his story. Finally, in a burst of emotion, tears welling in his eyes, he blurted out, "Sir, I'm only 16 years old!"

"Don't worry, son," the chaplain replied. "You'll get over that."

—The Rev. John S. Armfield

We were a typical group of soldiers and army families waiting to board a transport plane. A stewardess appeared at the loading gate to announce the flight, saying, "Unaccompanied pregnant women will board the plane first. Please step forward as I call your names."

The little military stewardess had no sooner called the names of two women than a pompous colonel shouldered his way forward. "See here," he demanded. "Ranking personnel are to board first. As senior officer present, I order you to check me onto the plane."

"Certainly, Colonel," coolly replied the stewardess. Then, as the colonel strutted by, she turned to us and announced, "If there are any other pregnant colonels in the group, they may also board now."

—True (Contributor's name withheld)

One of my N.C.O.'s was admitted to our base hospital for possible surgery. He received a get-well card from the company supply sergeant. Inside was the message: "If they take anything out, make them sign for it."

—Lt. Col. D. D. Nicholson, Jr.

A student pilot reported for his final check ride in the Link trainer, which without leaving the ground simulates the feel of an actual airplane under flight conditions.

He entered the trainer and "took off." His flight

seemed to be going smoothly when suddenly his fuel warning light came on. Calmly he asked the instructor to turn the switch to fill the tank, but to his surprise the request was refused. "You should have thought of that before you took off," the instructor retorted.

Soon his fuel tank registered empty. The instruments started spinning crazily. A crash was inevitable.

Laughing, the instructor asked, "Now what are you going to do?"

The canopy slid back and the student stepped out. "Just where do you think you're going?" the instructor snapped.

"I've just bailed out, sir," was the reply.

—Don Nuell

Having spent all their lives in the army, our teen-age daughters have become hardened to the inevitable moves and consequent separations from their friends. Recently one asked her father if he knew a certain major and if he could find out his rotation date. My husband asked why.

"Because," she replied, "he has the cutest son, but I'm not going to all the trouble of making him notice me if they're being posted soon."

—Mrs. Lawrence Curtin

The official name of "Merrill's Marauders" was 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional).

In one of their worst moments in the Burmese jungles, with Japanese shells slamming into their position, a voice in the darkness was heard to call, "Where the hell are the other five thousand three hundred and six composite units?"

—Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Marauders* (Harper), quoted by Maurice Dolbier in *New York Herald Tribune*

A navy ship often adopts a female movie star as its collective favorite. My friend who is on a mine-sweeper reports that the officers and crew of his ship have voted Mitzi Gaynor as the star they would most like to sweep with.

—John R. Brightman

Sweeney was a "sick-bay sailor," first class. Hardly a day went by that he didn't show up with a sore throat or aching back. He had quite a reputation with the medics and corpsmen.

Sweeney was good-hearted, nevertheless, and when I had to go to sick bay with an infected foot he carried my gear for me. It was raining, so he stuffed my bag of laundry under his raincoat.

We no sooner got in sight of the sick bay than I heard a corpsman roar out to the doctor on duty: "Here comes Sweeney again. Now he's pregnant!"

—Ken Kraft in *True*

After six weeks of intensified basic training we were asked to fill out a questionnaire. One question, "What was your reason for joining the air force?" was followed by a list of possible answers such as patriotism, to learn a trade, see the world, become part of a great military organization, etc. The airman beside me had just shared 17 straight hours of KP with me, and I glanced over to see what he had checked.

There was no mistaking his answer. He had crossed out all possible answers and written in large letters, "TEMPORARY INSANITY."

—Earl W. Ramsdell



The men waiting to board the troopship were told they had 30 minutes until loading time. They fell out, unstrapped their packs and relaxed. As often happens, the whistle blew five minutes later. In the rush, equipment was scattered, tempers flared and shouts resounded: "Where's my entrenching tool?" "Where's my pack?" At the peak of the confusion, tension was broken when one man asked meekly, "Has anyone seen my hand-grenade pin?"

—R. G. B.

When a college student veteran arrived late for his early-morning class, the professor chided him. "Well, you finally made it," he said. "What did they say to you in the army when you came in late like this?"

"Why," the student replied, "when I came in late they said, 'How are you this morning, sir?' and saluted."

—T. M. Watson

A flying instructor assigned to advanced flying school was unhappy about seven students who failed to follow his maneuvers properly during formation flights. He ended a ten-minute lecture with these words:

"If you guys expect to become pilots, you'd better start following me properly. I want it understood that on the next flight you will have to stay with me, no matter what happens. Is that clearly understood?"

On the next formation flight the engine of the instructor's plane failed, and he was forced to glide to a hazardous landing in a rough field — accompanied by seven student pilots who, despite his attempts to wave them off, stayed with him wing-to-wing all the way down.

—Harold L. Craven in *The Airman*

As First Lord of the Admiralty, early in World War II, Winston Churchill was inspecting a warship which had had an abnormal number of changes in its complement. The young officer in charge of one division was taken aback when Churchill said, "I suppose you know the names of all the men in your division?"

But he quickly recovered and replied, "Oh, yes, sir."

"Then what," asked the First Lord, noticing the hesitation, "is the name of this man?"

"Arthur Smith, sir."

Churchill turned to the man and asked him his name.

"Arthur Smith, sir," came at once from the loyal lips of Able Seaman William Smart.

—"Peterborough" in *The Daily Telegraph*, London

A navy enlisted man had fallen overboard, but a nearby ship quickly spotted him. She rushed to the rescue at such speed that she went on past him before she could stop. As the ship maneuvered to make another attempt, an officer on the bridge, trying to reassure the man in the water, shouted, "Don't worry, we'll have you aboard soon."

Shaking with cold and apprehension and unimpressed by the seamanship so far displayed, the swimmer shouted back, "Well, don't take too long. I'm getting out of the navy in four more days."

—Capt. Robert W. McNitt

At our air base walking on the grass was strictly forbidden, but there were numerous offenses and the men were wearing a path across the beautiful lawn. The sergeant of one outfit tried several variations on the usual "Keep Off the Grass" signs. Finally he discovered a sign that worked. It read: "SHORT CUT TO K.P."

—Marvin J. Gilliam

A couple of sailors laying over for a day or two in Sweden decided to go to church. Knowing no Swedish, they figured to play safe by picking out a dignified-looking gentleman sitting in front of them and doing whatever he did.

During the service the pastor made a special announcement of some kind, and the man in front of them rose. The two sailors quickly got to their feet, too — only to be met by roars of laughter from the whole congregation.



When the service was over and they were greeted by the pastor at the door, they discovered he spoke English and naturally asked what the cause of the merriment had been.

"Oh," said the pastor, "I was announcing a baptism, and asked the father of the child to stand."

—Angie Cordero

Several of our navy steward's mates had taken written examinations for advancement in rating, and I was grading papers. It was dull and monotonous, until I came across one man's answer to the multiple choice question: "- - - is a sign of efficiency in the galley." Ignoring such suggested answers as "cleanliness," this enterprising boy had carefully lettered in the blank space: "Hash."

I gave him a passing grade on the spot.

Edd E. Rountree

When my husband was transferred to the mainland from Hawaii, we flew via Military Air Transport Service in a Boeing Stratocruiser with pressurized cabin. Although there were at least 15 children aboard, the ten-hour flight was remarkably quiet. My husband, talking with the pilot, commented on the children's behavior and wondered why they were so good. The pilot laughed and told him, "When we have a load of kids on board and they begin to get ram-bunctious, we just run the cabin altitude up a few thousand feet. Sure is funny how sleepy it makes 'em!"

—Jean Kellersberger

During World War II John Phillips, a professor at a Midwestern university, received a commission as a naval commander for limited duty—teaching English at a pre-flight school. His orders directed him to proceed to the Boston Navy Yard. When he reported, the captain of the yard told him he was late and should get down to the seawall as quickly as possible. There the new officer was hailed by a lieutenant. "Commander Phillips? Please get aboard, sir," he urged. "We're late."

Up the gangway he went, boarding a ship for the first time in his life. When the vessel cast loose and headed to sea, the professor, violently seasick in his bunk, learned that he was supposed to be in command of the ship.

He was sick all the way over to England and all the way back to Boston. There he wobbled down the gangway to be confronted by a hard-boiled officer. "Are you Commander John Phillips, Naval Reserve?"

"I am," weakly replied Phillips.

"Well, so am I," roared the deep-sea officer. "And if you think you loused up my command, just wait until you see your English class in that college down at Chapel Hill!"

—Col. Harvey L. Miller

There was a shortage of submarine personnel during World War II, because the physical and mental requirements were extremely high. Aboard ship we had a machinist's mate who met all the requirements but for some reason refused to volunteer. Our executive officer worked on him day after day, overcoming his objections one by one, pointing out all the advantages of submarine duty — the pay, the leave provisions, the chow and the glory. Just when he thought he had Ozzie convinced, the sailor came up with an objection that stumped the officer.

"Sir," said Ozzie, "I like to sleep with the windows open."

—James N. Raptis

Private Travis didn't take well to discipline and the chaplain decided to write to his parents in the Blue Ridge Mountains. He urged them to advise their son to mend his ways—otherwise he was likely to wind up in serious trouble.

Two weeks later the boy was in the brig. "Didn't your parents write to you?" the padre asked him.

"Yes, Pop wrote," said the boy. He pulled a letter from his pocket and handed it to the chaplain.

It was an affectionate, encouraging letter, closing with these words: "Shore tickled to hear about yore hell-raising, son. That's the old Travis spirit!"

—Lt. Col. Robert J. Allen

The buses for shipyard personnel at Pearl Harbor had seen better days, but some people took advantage of the free service to go sight-seeing. Finally the navy posted on each bus door a sign reading: "No Pleasure Riding on This Bus." It wasn't long before someone scrawled below one of the signs, "Ain't it the truth?"

—Owen Grinde

It was my first jump. At 1200 feet I was first man in the "stick" and was standing in the door of the plane when word came that we'd have to make another pass over the "drop zone" before we could leave the plane. This meant I'd have to spend several extra minutes looking down at the ground. By the time we were making our second approach the jumpmaster realized how nervous I was. Glaring at me, he asked, "Yellow?"

"No, I'm not, Sergeant," I snapped back.

"Think you're tough?"

"Pretty tough."

"Think you can whip me?" he asked.

By now I wasn't sure if he was serious or not, but it was too late to back down. "I'd like to try," I said.

"Okay," he said with a grin, "then step outside."

And I did.

—Rev. Donald C. Bakely



During basic training, our sergeant did his best to make our lives miserable. When we were issued .45 automatics for the first time, everyone began to wave the unloaded weapons around and snap the triggers at various objects. "Now remember," the sergeant roared, "the first rule with any weapon is never to point it at anyone unless you mean to kill him."

Glancing around to see the effect of his admonition, he made the chilling discovery that every weapon was now aimed directly at him.

—Robert J. Bagby

A group of veterans were swapping experiences during lights-out in an army hospital ward when the conversation turned to the distinctive sound made by the German 88 shells.

"I remember one night in France," said a sergeant. "We had just started to sack out when them 88's began zeroing in on us. Everybody headed for the slit trenches — everybody but me. I couldn't get out of my sleeping bag! The zipper was stuck tight, and I could hear the 88's walking closer and closer."

A sympathetic silence came over the darkened ward. Then an anxious voice asked, "What did you do?"

"Man," the sergeant replied, "don't ever let anybody tell you that you can't run with a sleeping bag on!"

—Edward P. Reilly

We were dug in on a hill when the enemy hit us with everything he had. At the height of the barrage, I heard the private next to me mutter, "Oh, if Ma had only been right!"

During a lull in the shooting, I asked him what he meant. He looked at me, shook his head and said sadly, "Before I was born Ma was sure I was going to be a girl."

—Donald Tracy

One day our anti-aircraft artillery battery awaited an inspection by the commanding general. Frantic last-minute checks were made on the camouflage of every possible item in the battery area, for camouflage held a high place in the general's heart.

But, despite all the precautionary sweat of the men, the general was not favorably impressed. As he concluded a gruff dissertation on the merits of his favorite topic, he turned to stalk off and promptly disappeared—into the camouflaged kitchen sump pit.

—Maj. Lawrence M. Vroom

The instructor in ground-crew mechanics, explaining a complicated phase of aerodynamics, placed on the blackboard an intricate diagram, to which he added connecting lines and circles as the lecture proceeded. Soon the board was covered with a maze of interlacing lines, studded here and there with circles.

The explanation over, the students stared in silence, too bewildered to put their questions into words. The instructor, unable to believe that everyone had assimilated this difficult lesson so quickly, asked, "Any questions?"

Finally one student spoke up. "Please, sir," he said, "who carried the ball on that last play?"

—Hazel Stewart

It was my first pass from the hospital after being flown back from overseas. It was also my first shaky venture into a bistro on crutches.

Several beers later life became almost bearable. My head was resting on the shoulder of a sympathetic WAC corporal named Rosie, who brushed aside my melancholy fears that I would never walk again properly. The remainder of the evening was hazy. The Chi-Chi Club. The Lido. And somewhere an MP growling, "Better get back in the sack, Mac."

My misery was interrupted late the next afternoon by the arrival of the largest florist's box I had ever seen. I tore away the fancy wrappings and found a card. It was from Rosie.

"Congratulations," she wrote. "You sure don't need these any more!"

Inside the box were my crutches.

—George Antonich

Was it a sailor who discovered that a small muscle in the eye can pick up a full-grown girl?

—North Battleford, Sask., *News-Optimist*

During basic training my husband wasn't very successful in following the rules and regulations set up for inspections. One morning the exasperated inspecting officer yelled, "This is the third time in a row you have not had your shirt properly buttoned! I have given you extra duties hoping to make you more obedient, but all to no avail. Tell me, do you have any children?"

"Yes, sir, I have two," my husband answered.

"Now, if you told them time and again to do something and they still didn't follow your orders, just what would you do?"

"Well, sir," was the reply, "I'd send them to their mother."

—Ruth Wade Justice

The C. O. at our camp burst into his office one morning in a temper. Grabbing the phone, he called the post hospital commander and announced, "Colonel, I just passed one of your young medical officers who failed to salute. When I stopped him to remind him of military courtesy, I was shocked by his dress and demeanor. His shoes were unpolished, his uniform was wrinkled and he needed a shave and a haircut. I won't have an officer like that in my command. I want him to see the post psychiatrist immediately!"

"Sir," came the hospital commander's reply, "that is the post psychiatrist."

—G. L. Nelson

While stationed at a camp with the Red Cross I received a surprise package from a special army friend. It was a small phonograph record. I had no record player but I found one on a shelf in a tiny room at the service club. I closed the door, put the record on and sat back to listen to an

enthraling message: "Hi there, sweet. It's Bill. Honey, I certainly miss you. I got your letter and it gave me a thrill . . ."

Suddenly a woman appeared at the door, looked in doubtfully, but went away. I continued to listen, enchanted — it was almost like sitting on the sofa back home, holding hands.

The woman reappeared. This time, after a moment's hesitation, she said, "I wonder if you realize this record is on the public-address system."

—Mary Jane Rogers

One of my duties as battalion mess officer in Germany was to check the daily menu against the cook's work sheet.

One day when scrambled eggs were on the breakfast menu, the cook's work sheet listed powdered eggs, followed by the note, "Add 1 broken eggshell." Perplexed, I asked the mess sergeant why he was feeding the troops eggshells with their scrambled eggs.

"Just using a little psychology, sir," he replied. "The boys don't go for these powdered eggs at all, and when they bite into a piece of eggshell they think they're eating the real McCoy. There's hardly any waste nowadays."

—Kingsford D. Bigelow

A British brigadier, called back to wartime service, once boasted to Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "I'm 68, and I can do anything my men can. I don't drink, don't smoke, always take care of myself. I'm 100 percent fit!"

"I," said the prime minister, "am also 68. But I do smoke, do drink, never take care of myself. And I am 200 percent fit!"

—Arthur Krock

We had been flying over the South Pacific for about three hours on a wartime mission when a small island appeared on our starboard wing. The intercom crackled: "Turret to pilot. Investigate objects on beach at two o'clock."

There was a moment's silence. Then the pilot's voice snapped over the intercom: "Any idiot can plainly see that the objects are merely native girls bathing in the surf."

From the turret the voice sighed softly back: "I know . . . I know!"

—D. B. McNeely

A veteran who had served with the Military Police was trying to convince another vet of the merits of his branch of the service. "After all," said the ex-MP, "we suffered more casualties than any other branch."

"And why shouldn't you have," sniffed the other vet, "with enemies on both sides?"

—Harold Helfer

A young sailor phoned his station and requested an extension of his pass, but was told to return immediately. "But I can't," he protested. "There are ten of us at this party, and we're having too much fun for me to break it up."

"How come your leaving the party will break it up?" snapped the petty officer at the station.

"Well, you see, sir," said the sailor, "nine of us are girls!"

—Maurice Peacock, Jr.



In our B-17 we were returning from a target over Germany, when my rookie waist gunner on the port side cut loose with his 50-caliber machine guns. Looking out the window, I saw a lone German fighter flying parallel to us but at a very respectable distance. Again, the twin 50's clattered. I could see the tracer bullets falling far short of their target. I called the new gunner on the intercom: "Hey, fella, that plane is way out of range."

Amid another burst from the guns, he replied, "Yes-sir, I know, and that's where I intend to keep him."

—V. G. Ibert

An inquisitive woman was questioning my brother, home on leave, about his military experiences. She asked him concerning his rank, medals if any, length of service and so forth, winding up with, "You are with the army, aren't you?"

"No, ma'am," he replied gravely. "I've been agin 'em all the way."

—Mary Peters

The various department supervisors were reporting to the admiral on the status of current projects at the naval shipyard. The supervisor in charge of overhauling a submarine announced that the submarine could put to sea for diving trials the following Monday. Knowing that repairs to many of the ship's vital systems were far from completion the sub's engineering officer, a lieutenant, jumped to his feet.

"But that's impossible, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Young man," retorted the admiral, "can you give me one reason why your ship will not be able to dive?"

"No, sir, I can't," he replied, "but I can give you a hundred reasons why she won't be able to surface!"

—Lt. Raymond E. Engle

A veteran, who had served as an air gunner in World War II, had nothing but contempt for the screeching, flaming jets of the modern air force. One day he watched a T-33 jet trainer roar in for a landing. When the pilot climbed out he seemed troubled. He walked around the jet, peered under it and over it and even knocked on the cowlings around the exhaust opening. The veteran walked over for a closer look. "What's the matter, son?" he inquired mildly. "Pilot light gone out?"

—Bob King

During a ship's dance, a young Royal Marine couldn't keep his eyes off a pin worn by his partner, which depicted a cluster of naval signaling flags. "I see you're admiring my brooch," she said. "It was a present from my husband and the flags mean, 'I Love You.'"

Knowing that the word "love" wasn't in the naval signal manual, the Royal Marine turned to his manual as soon as he got back to his quarters. What the flags actually signaled, he discovered, was: "Permission to lay alongside."

—*The Globe and Laurel*, (Royal Marines, Eastney Barracks)

It was one of those black jungle nights in the Solomons, and Japanese bombers had slipped in undetected. The exploding bombs shocked us out of our sleep, and we lit out for cover in a nearby foxhole. Originally intended for three men, the foxhole was suddenly stocked with eight soldiers. The eerie quiet that followed the first bombing run was broken by steady cursing from the bottom of the pile. Finally the voice gasped, "You guys are crushin' me!"

There was a moment of silence and then from the top of the heap came a whisper, "You want to trade?"

—B. F. Nordberg



